RAZORCAKE

Quinceañera Issue!

#90

Martha

Félix Reyes
(Big Crux, Lifes Halt)

Pears Fugue

One Punk's Guide to Outlaw Country

fifteen years of non-profit punk rock

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Razorcake is a massive group effort based on simple activities. Our 178 volunteers make this zine, put out music, publish razorcake.org, help put on shows, and run podcasts. We are active, daily participants in DIY punk. Making Razorcake helps us feel less isolated.

When we act together, life can be a bit more tolerable.

Razorcake's focus isn't making money. We are not a conduit for indiscriminant corporate bullshit advertising. For fifteen years, the good ship Razorcake has remained afloat with ethical advertising and direct subscriptions at reasonable rates. We are sustainable. That is our goal.

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They were a band that both the curmudgeons and the youngsters could get behind. Energetic and fierce, their existence supported our idea of what LA punk is, and can be. They will be missed.

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Piñata Grrrlhood

Razorcake is now fifteen years old. I've been here the whole time—how did that happen? Ninety issues divided by six times a year: fifteen. The math works because we've never been late with a single issue. I can't say longevity was the plan with Razorcake, but I know I still don't have a backup plan. I'm stubborn and—I'll fully admit—not right for this world in fundamental ways. I'm not an entrepreneur. I'm not a hustler. I'm an absolute shit salesperson. Yet here we are 5,475 days later, still making this zine.

I'm fully aware a bi-monthly DIY punk zine in 2016 doesn't make a hell of a lot of sense. But after fifteen years, at least to me, it doesn't make sense in all the right ways. It sounds corny. It's a way to establish and keep true friendships and deepen non-blood, familial love.

I almost gave up in 2015—leaving everything mid-stream, ghosting more than I already am, disappearing. Two friends took their own lives. My marriage ended in February and I lived—literally—three feet under my separated wife for eleven months; her footfalls were a daily reminder of bad choices, poor and repeated patterns, long-form failures that I ultimately made by my own volition. But Razorcake is genuinely a group effort, and I'm the boss, even if I don't want to be and don't like the title. I'm responsible for hundreds of people's creative output and a handful of people's financial stability. Razorcake is something that shouldn't disappear, even when 2015 became a year-long shit sandwich.

Razorcake participates in a plainclothes daily resistance against mass production and dominant culture—and cultural negativity. We are working towards a way of living that makes sense and is powerful, using DIY punk as cipher, sigil, and prism. Not everything has to be a competition. There can be community. We are not alone. I am not alone. It's all webbed together, pulsing subcutaneously right underneath visible skin.

Razorcake is made of paper and ink and hundreds of people.

I recently had an intense dream from the first-"person" perspective of a piñata. I was carried underarm and walked into the room of a surprise celebration. The letters "¡Feliz Quiñceanera!" were strewn from the ceiling. The room was bright and colorful, full of smiles and warm cheer.

A tiara out of cut-up beer cans was put on top of my head.

The glitter canon was loaded and discharged. Crates were pulled out, a record cued up, the needle dropped. It was time to celebrate another accomplishment. This one for Razorcake's passage between grrrlhood and becoming a womyn, a fifteen-year milestone few zines achieve.

Martha's "Gin and Listerine" blasted from the speakers. People sang along. "I know it hurts right now / But these moments help us grow!"

As the piñata—an empty vessel artistically shaped to be happily beaten—I spilled out candy and condoms and airplane-size bottles of booze. Everyone scrambled to the ground, laughed, and filled their pockets.

Sometimes just holding on, being the cored-out container is its own rough, but satisfying, reward.

This issue is dedicated to co-founder Sean Carswell's departure as a Razorcake columnist. Even though I'll see you regularly, I'm far from the only one who'll miss you in our pages.

–Todd Taylor

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Cover design by Donna Ramone
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Struggle makes us fantastic. Remember that.

–Derrick C. Brown, *prologue, "A Kick in the Chest," Born in the Year of the Butterfly*

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Anthony Morabith.

Coco McBride

Part human, part marshmallow. Has her own punx vest.

THANK YOU: Peek-a-boo you! Glitter gold heart thanks to Will Pilgrim and Donna Ramone for the Martha photo and cover design; No, not the thing on the back of a shark, it's French thanks to Brad Beshaw for his illo. in Sean's column; Speckled sky, quilted sea, hangnail moon thanks to Becky Rodriquez for her illo. in Jim's column; Brodüdes with confusing words of praise instead of hurled cans of Dü thanks to Steve Thueson for his illo. in Cassie's column; Shirts on! Beers on the floor, vinyl strewn like a jukebox puked thanks to Alex Barrett for his illo. in Nørb's column; Röck in Peace, Philthy Animäl thanks to Codey Richards for his illo. in Dale's column; Based on real events, down to the maple bars in the bass drum thanks to Bill Pinkel for his illo. in the Chicken's column; Where are my pants? Where are my pants? Cue Sexy's* Por Vida *thanks to Jackie Rusted for her illo. in Jennifer's column; 1-2-3-4! thanks to Chad Williams, Jamy Cadry, Julie A. Ferguson, Marc Gärtner, and Erin Burkett for the Brandon Carlisle remembrance and photos; Although the "Fuck Johnny Cash" may seem unforgivable as a header, read on and learn some deeper roots thanks to MP Johnson, Art Fuentes, and Madeline Bridenbaugh for the One Punk's Guide to Outlaw Country article, illos., and layout; It's somewhat criminal that they're such an overlooked component in fruit salad, and yet so photogenic thanks to Paul Silver and Dylan Davis for the Pears interview, photos, and layout; Spoiler alert Johnny Cash is evoked, along with cookie and cream ice cream. It's a subtheme to the issue thanks to Sean Arenas, Andrew Schubert, Zach Miller, Shelby Fujioka, and Becky Bennett for the Fugue interview, photos, and layout; This isn't a joke. They're from a legit town called Pity Me thanks to David Littlefair, James Birthwhistle, Will Pilgrim, Joseph Towns, and Eric Baskauskas for the Martha interview, photos, and layout; Language and music are all a part of the big crux celebration/colonialism thanks to Juan Espinosa and Matt Average for help with the Félix Reyes interview.

"You can't do better than this terrible band name and a naked woman with pig head riding a hot dog into space on the cover?" –Mike Frame *reviewing Testosteroso's* Into the Sun *CD. It's a pertinent question, no?; Thanks to 90's rotation of music, zines, books, and video reviewers: Jim Joyce, Madeline, Jimmy Alvarado, Sean Arenas, Kurt Morris, Sean Koepenick, Ryan Nichols, Garrett Barnwell, MP Johnson, Rich Cocksedge, Jackie Rusted, Camylle Reynolds, Billups Allen, Simone Carter, Steve Adamyk, Kelley O'Death, Chad Williams, Matt Seward, Matt Average, Juan Espinosa, Matt Werts, Indiana Laub, Nørb, Art Ettinger, Kayla Greet, Bryan Static, Mark Twistworthy, Mike Frame, Ian Wise, Chris Terry, Paul J. Comeau, Sal Lucci, Craven Rock, Keith Rosson, Tim Brooks, John Mule, Jim Woster and Tricia Ramos.*

If you're a woman who is knowledgeable about DIY punk, are good with deadlines, and are open to the editorial process, this is an open invitation to drop us a line about doing reviews, interviews, articles, or a webcolumn for Razorcake. Even with a moratorium on adding any new male reviewers to our roster for almost two years, that section is far from gender parity. Please help us out. (razorcake.org/contact-us)

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Issue #90 Feb. / Mar. 2016
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Dedicated to my new monsters (Mr. Freckle Monster and Miss Daisy Dew) and my old monsters (Fangsana, Khaleesi, and Amy Teegan). xox Forevrr.

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The following folks stepped forward to help us do our part over the past two months. Without their help, Razorcake wouldn't be what it is:
Todd Taylor, Daryl Gussin, Sean Carswell, Skinny Dan, Katy Spining, Candice Tobin, Kari Hamanaka, Matthew Hart, Donna Ramone, Phill Legault, Steve Couch, Chris Baxter, Madeline Bridenbaugh, Robert El Diablo, Mark McBride, James Hernandez, Alice Bag, Seth Swaaley, Marty Ploy, Rachel Murray Framingheddu, Rene Navarro, Billy Kostka III, Derek "Rising Star" Whipple, Jason Willis, Janeth Galaviz, Rishbha Bhagi, Adrian Chi, Megan Pants, Alex Martinez, Jimmy Alvarado, Andrew Wagher, Matt Average, Ever Velasquez, Joe Dana, Christina Zamora, Juan Espinosa, Meztli Hernandez, Sean Arenas, Aaron Kovacs, Julia Smut, Jenn Witte, Dave Eck, Tim Burkert, Jeff Proctor, Josh Rosa, Toby Tober, Sal Lucci, Jennifer Federico, Jennifer Whiteford, Kayla Greet, Marcos Siref, Steve Thueson, Evan Wolff, Cassie J. Sneider, Bill Pinkel, Kurt Morris, Vee Liu, Laura Collins, Eric Baskauskas, Bianca, Rhea Tepp, Russ Van Cleave, John Di Marco, Samantha Mc Bride, Simon Sotelo, Susan de Place, Bryan Static, John Miskelly, Jamie L. Rotante, Genesis Bautista, Andy Garcia, Camylle Reynolds, Becky Bennett, Craven Rock, Replay Dave, Adam Ali, Matt Sweeting, Chris Devlin, Codey Richards, Ryan Nichols, Aimee Pijpers, Liz Mayorga, Brad Dwyer, MP Johnson, Mor Fleisher, Ryan Leach, Tim Brooks, Patrick Houdek, Louis Jacinto, Chris Boarts Larson, J.V. McDonough, Isaac Thotz, Kat Jetson, Noah Wolf, Cahnie Galletta, John Mule, Chris L. Terry, Ryan Gelatin, Alex Cady, Aaron Zonka, Rick V., Kelly O'Grady, Pete Stapleton, Rachel Gouk, Alex Harris, Rodrigo V., Jack Fallows, Cathy Hannah, Sam Grinberg, Lukas Myhan, Jim Kettner, Dylan Davis, Becky Rodriguez, Gabby Gonzalez, Shereen Dudar, Keith Rosson, Megan Razzetti, Bill Ebert, Paul Silver, Julie A. Ferguson, Matt Werts, Stacy Medina, and David Ensminger.

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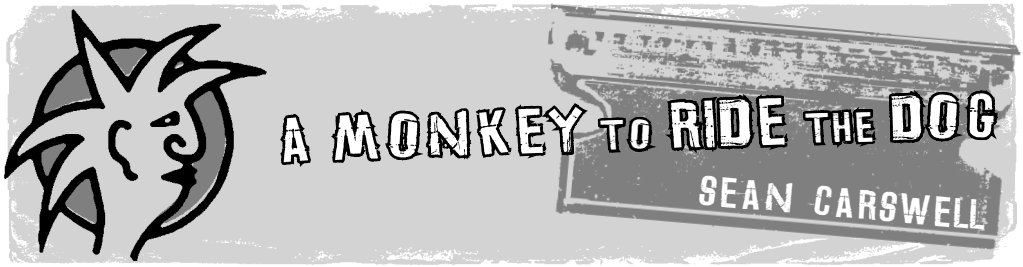
This issue of *Razorcake* is made possible in part by grants from the City of Los Angeles, Department of Cultural Affairs and is supported by the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors through the Los Angeles Arts Commission.



Most days I feel like I'm twenty. Some days, I wear T-shirts that are older than twenty...

Marked Men and Me

In January of 1996, I got a box of CDs in the mail from *Flipside*. My buddy Todd Taylor started working there a few months earlier. He'd asked me if I wanted to do reviews. I did. It was so long ago that even though computers and email existed, I didn't have access to either one. I typed my reviews and mailed them to Pasadena. Todd had to retype them into a Word document and reduce them to 6-point font before they could run in the magazine.

When this column runs, it'll mark exactly twenty years since I first started writing for punk rock zines. It's weird to me. Most days I feel like I'm twenty years old. Some days, I wear T-shirts that are older than twenty.

A couple of years into my run at *Flipside* I was still pretty low on the pecking order, still reviewing the stuff no one else wanted. Todd sent me a 7" from a band called E-class. It was okay. Not great and not bad. The most memorable thing about it is in the liner notes. The band thanks Jeff Burke, their new drummer. This meant my review of E-class was the first time I wrote about Marked Men-related music.

E-class and I had a lot in common in those days. We were both just finding our style—both raw, both derivative, both earnest, both making bad choices and art that we'd probably be embarrassed about later. Maybe I'm more embarrassed about those early *Flipside* writings than E-class is about that record. I wrote two decent features and one decent column for *Flipside*. Everything else was shit. I'm glad it's hard to find now.

In early January 2001, I jammed nearly everything I owned into the bed of my truck, left enough room for me to sleep back there, and drove from Florida to California to start *Razorcake* with Todd. Our friend and co-founder Danny Clarke built the website. Todd and I focused on web content and the print zine. For those first issues, we did so much. We took photographs, we interviewed bands, we established relationships with labels and bands that would advertise with us, we set up accounts with magazine distributors and records stores, we laid the magazine out, and we wrote. It amazes me how much I wrote for those early issues. How many book reviews, record reviews, zine reviews, interviews, features, editorials, and columns. I was going back through the first twenty issues not long ago, preparing the PDFs of them for a university archive, and I realized that I wrote between a third and a half of the words in a bunch of those zines. I also wrote two books in that time, plus articles and stories for a ton of other zines. I was having a blast.

The guys who became the Marked Men seemed to be at their most punk-rock productive in those years, too. Jeff Burke played on the Chop-Sakis album *Ghost Town Crowd*. The two Reds albums came out on Rip Off Records. The first two Marked Men albums came out. *On the Outside*, the second of those, earned the Marked Men an interview and a picture on the cover of *Razorcake*.

What a run it was for those guys. Go back and listen to all of it. The Chop-Sakis feels like a side project for musicians more focused on bigger things, but every song holds up today. It's tight and fast, the first real introduction to the melodic punk rock that became the Marked Men. The Reds are dirtier and more distorted. They have the ghost of The Sonics in their PA. The first Marked Men cleans that up a little bit. In all those albums, you hear growth. They get better at what they're doing. And what they're doing is original and intentional. It's specific. It's unmistakable.

This period, for the Marked Men and for me, clarifies what it means to become an artist. It's about practicing all the time, trying new stuff, finding your voice, finding a rhythm that works for you, developing, refining, growing, and having the courage to put it out there. It's a balance between being a perfectionist and knowing that it's never going to be perfect.

And then there's *On the Outside*. If you wanted to buy only one record released in the first decade of the twenty-first century, I'd recommend this one. It's where the Marked Men find that blend of energy and melody, rolling guitars and rocking drums, clear vocals and muffled words. The lyrics are so heartfelt even when you can't make out all the words or what they mean in that order. When I play this record, I feel it inside. It fills all that space around my lungs and heart and ribs.

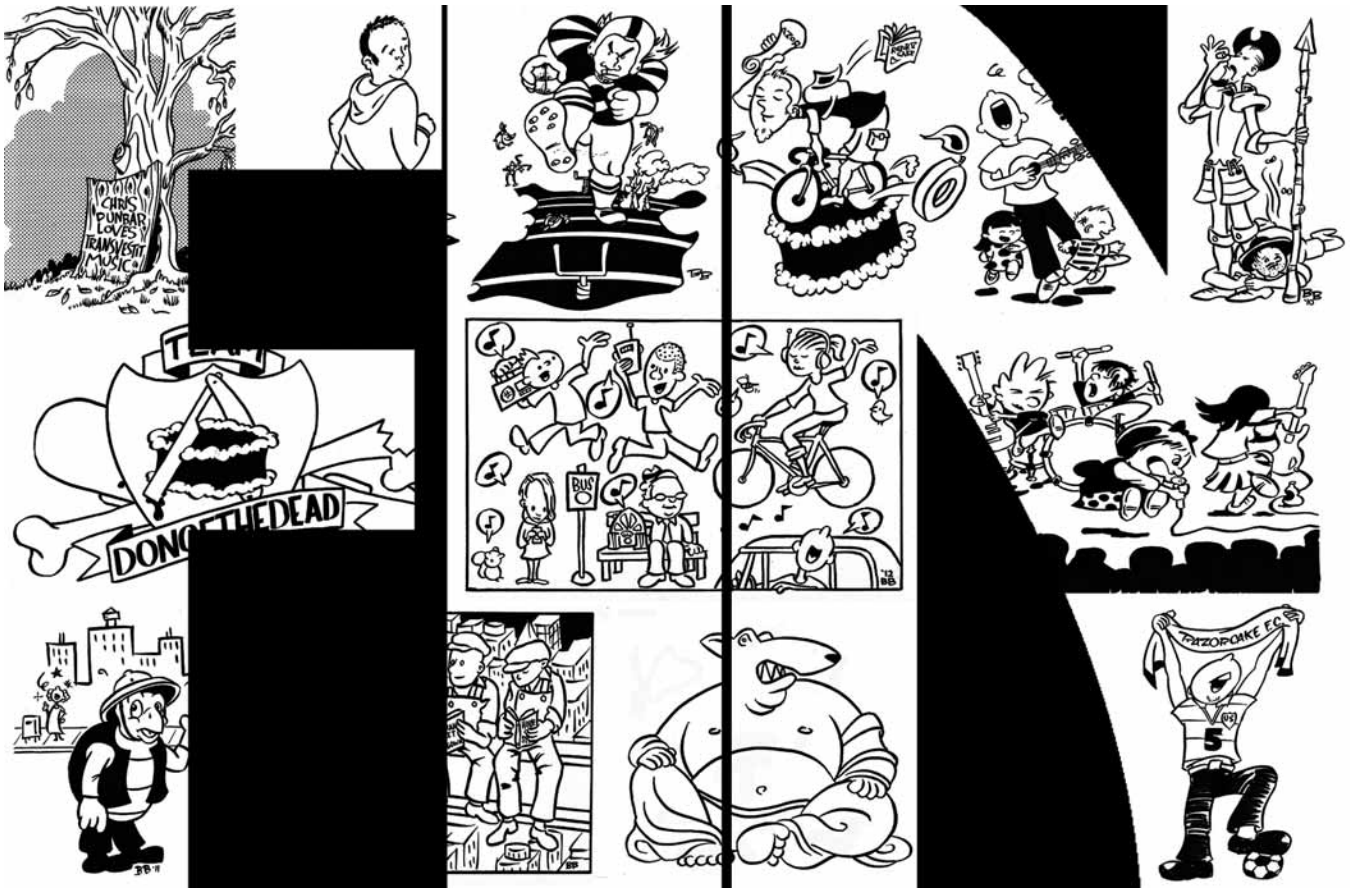
I'm not a very sentimental guy, but I'm sentimental about this record. In the summer of 2005, I got back to California after touring to support my book *Barney's Crew*. I had some low points on that tour and some moments that really made me think about what I was writing and where I wanted to go with it. I wanted to write a novel that honored my working class Florida roots—that celebrated the culture I grew up in, but also that allowed me to move beyond the invisible boundaries my hometown and socioeconomic class built around me. For most of July and August of that year, I wrote the first draft of that novel. I spent four or five hours a morning on it. And most days, when I was done I'd listen to *On the Outside*, then go surfing with those songs stuck in my head.

In the summer of 2006, I went back to that draft and revised it. In order to get into the headspace of the previous summer, I would listen to *On the Outside*. The first side of the record would end with Mark and Jeff singing "I'm right here with you." I'd flip the record and start working on *Train Wreck Girl*.

The novel came out two years later. It's not perfect, but it's honest and true. I've written about punk rock for twenty years, and I understand that punk rock is music, not painting or writing or anything else. Still, *Train Wreck Girl* is the most punk rock thing I've written.

Right around the time I finished writing *Train Wreck Girl*, I went down to San Pedro to see the Marked Men play. They were touring to support their new record *Fix My Brain*. I had an advance copy of the CD already. I was able to sing along with all the songs at what amounted to the release party for the record. I still bought a copy of the vinyl at the show. I talked with Mark Ryan a bit when I bought it. I assume we didn't talk about anything particularly deep or significant. If we did, I don't remember what it was. I didn't ask him for any insight about the songs. I didn't even want him to clear up lyrics that I couldn't figure out on my own. I'm weird that way. I like to have my own relationship with music. I don't want anyone—critics, publicists, the musicians themselves—taking away my interpretations or feelings about songs and records I really love. This is why I haven't interviewed a band for *Razorcake* since issue twenty. It's why I haven't gone out of my way to meet any of my favorite punk rock musicians. It's why one basic, friendly conversation with Mark Ryan is my only personal interaction with any of the Marked Men.

Fix My Brain and *Ghosts*, the album that came out after it, taught me something else about making art. I love both records. I've listened to both hundreds of times over the past several years. But neither one reaches the heights of *On the Outside*. Not for me, anyway. It's hard for me to explain why. If *On the Outside* didn't exist, I'd be



BRAD BESHAW

It's a balance between being a perfectionist and knowing that it's never going to be perfect.

telling you that the one album you should buy is *Fix My Brain*. If neither of those existed, I'd be pushing *Ghosts*. But *On the Outside* exists. It realizes something. It sounds to me like everything they were doing prior to that record prepared them to write those songs and make that recording. Everything after *On the Outside* is a reminder of the record. And when you reach that point in your art, you have to move in a different direction.

The guys in the Marked Men have always been about making music in other ways. Individually, members have played in the Riverboat Gamblers, the High Tension Wires, the Potential Johns, Low Culture, the Chop-Sakis, the Reds, and maybe a band or two that I'm forgetting. Most recently, they've been playing in Mark Ryan's band the Mind Spiders and Jeff Burke's band Radioactivity. Most of those bands have been on the cover of *Razorcake*.

When a new album from any of those bands comes out, I buy it. When I play it around my wife, she typically asks, "Is this the Marked Men?" (Except in the case of the Riverboat Gamblers. She can always identify them.) The answer is, in a sense, "Yes." But to me, all those albums sound so different. The aesthetic is the same. Where they go with that aesthetic is the point.

Since *Train Wreck Girl*, I've taken my writing in a bunch of different directions. I wrote a bizarre and cerebral novel about advertising and madness and the collective unconscious it's called *Madhouse Fog.* It came out a couple of years ago. It's kind of my Mind Spiders book. I also wrote a short story collection about my favorite authors and their metaphysical ukuleles. It's a varied collection. A little heartbreaking. It comes out in May. It's my Radioactivity book. I've been doing other writing, too. Sometimes it's academic, sometimes it's personal. It's always rewarding.

Yet, during this whole time, I've been hammering away at this column for *Razorcake*. It's starting to feel like I'm not abiding by the lessons I learned from the Marked Men. They did *On the Outside* and moved on to new projects. They found ways to keep things new and fresh. Though, for me and this column, I haven't been able to do that. I feel like any longtime reader can predict what I'm going to say before I say it. I've gotten repetitive.

I don't want to be an old punk rocker telling the same old stories. I need to move on to new and fresh challenges. So, after fifteen years and ninety columns for *Razorcake*, this is my last one.

Thanks to Brad Beshaw for all the rad illustrations, and thanks to you for reading.

–Sean Carswell

One doesn't end up on a ship in the middle of nowhere by accident.

Come Back: Part 2

A sailor reflects on that which cannot be explained.

I am aware that sailors of yore mistook seals for women and called them mermaids. Although my skin is inked with the images of mermaids, I have never seen one, nor do I expect to.

*

Mostly what the aft look does is stare at nothing and think nothing thoughts. I taught myself not to look at my watch because the news would bring only disappointment. The minutes dragged when I measured them. And even if my stay on the fantail would be over soon, that only meant I would have to go back to the bridge and be accountable again.

My gaze was drawn, again and again, to the wake. Illuminated by the beams of the ship's aft running light, the wake was beautiful the way a fountain at night is beautiful, all that water ceaselessly foaming as the propeller's massive blades churned up the sea. After sketching the edges of the wake with my eyes, marveling at the invisible line where the water went from disturbed to calm, I'd wonder for the millionth time what it would be like to go overboard, to plunge into that other world. Would I survive? How long would I last? What would the ship look like as it steamed away? How would I feel as the ship went from being a blip on the horizon to nothing at all? Would I panic or would I experience something else, something perversely close to peace, my greatest wish coming true?

Sitting on a cold iron bit at the edge of the ship with my feet on the lifeline and nothing but a few feet between me and the deep blue sea, I was sometimes overcome by a desire to get even closer. Ensuring I was alone, I'd grab hold of the lifeline and lift one leg over the side and then the other. Making sure that the heels of my boots were hooked on the knife-edge of the deck's coping, I'd lean back, adopting the pose of a water skier. First I'd let go one hand, as if waving to a crowd of onlookers on the shore, and then I'd switch hands. After a while I'd resume my two-handed grip and for the briefest of moments, let go of the line altogether, and look down. Of course I looked down. I wanted a taste of that weightless oh fuck feeling when gravity is no longer on your side and you move from one environment to the next. At this point I'd hurriedly scurry over the lifeline, thrilled to have tempted fate, disappointed that the thrill, like all thrills, was fleeting.

I don't know how many times I did this. More than once, less than a dozen, but each time I did it the shame I felt afterward intensified. I no longer had the excuse of not knowing what it felt like. What was I looking to learn? What new thing was I grasping after? If it was oblivion I was after, why not just take the plunge? Did I lack the courage to meet it head on? Wasn't it what I *really* wanted?

*

I remember another watch at Great Lakes Recruit Training Command. I was standing the midnight watch and had just made my rounds inside the barracks. I was stooped over the logbook, writing my entry—"ALL SECURE"—when the hairs on the back of my neck stood on end. I turned around and a recruit named Adams was standing there. He had joined our company midway through boot camp, which meant he had been kicked out of his previous company, the equivalent to being held back a grade. The rumor was Adams was crazy, a rumor I unhappily confirmed as he stood before me mumbling incoherently about the people who were out to get him. I hadn't heard his approach. I hadn't seen him out of the corner of my eye. He wasn't on my radar at all. I just *knew*.

*

I learned to perceive the presence of the thing by the absence of everything else—the stars, the horizon, even the silhouette of the ship's superstructure—as the thing crossed from one side of the ship to the other. The fear faded away and something else took its place. The incredulity, astonishment, and wonder went away. Acceptance took its place. I stopped *looking* for it: it was other senses that alerted me to its presence. I didn't need to see it to know it was there. I just knew, and if *I* knew then it, whatever it was, knew, too. This knowing brought me great comfort, like being lost in a dream and encountering a guide to let me know I was on the right path.

And then suddenly (or gradually, who am I to say?), it was gone. I could no longer feel its presence and the realization left me feeling more alone that night than I'd ever felt in my entire life. "Come back," I whimpered to myself. "Don't leave me."

I knew right away that this was something I would never be able to talk about with my shipmates, which intensified the feeling. Like me, they would insist on an explanation, and when I couldn't give them one, they'd blame the instrument. To try to explain what I'd witnessed, what I'd perceived, would invoke ridicule from the brutes who passed for friends, people with whom I exchanged many stories from home. When I think back on all things I used to share with people I barely knew, I wonder if my shipmates were nothing more than depositories for memories to sustain the illusion that we had something to come back to, which none of us did. Not a single one.

*

One doesn't end up on a ship in the middle of nowhere by accident.

*

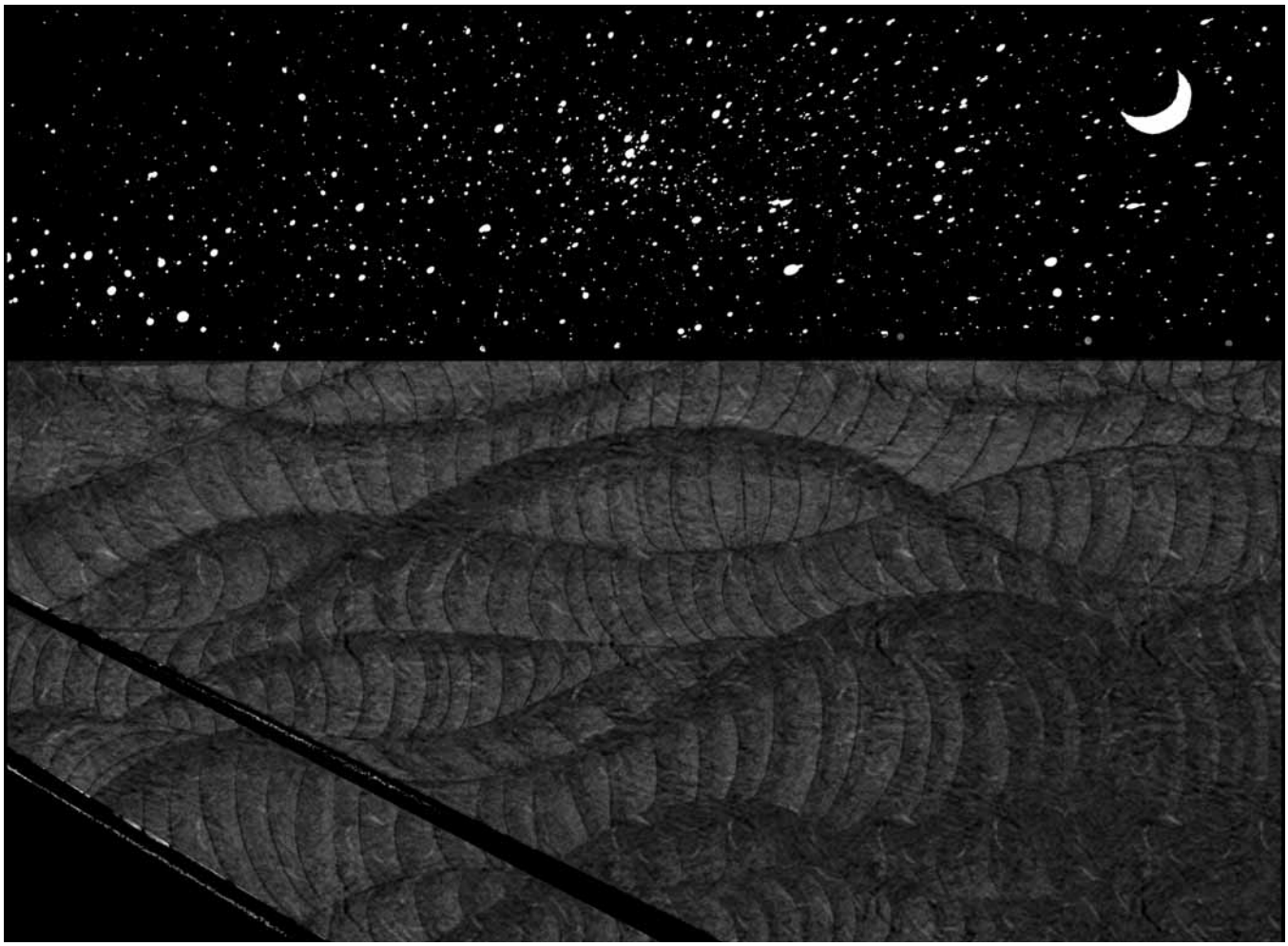
Many years later, my father, whose career as a naval officer at the Pentagon concerned the occult science of logistics, told me that his office had recommended doing away with the aft lookout because the vast majority of the men and women who had gone overboard were… aft lookouts.

*

I don't know what was out there that night, but there are things I've told you about that night that I know not to be true. I wasn't alone. I was on ship with a crew of three hundred sailors. And I was not out on the ocean deep but a well-traveled channel in the Pacific Ocean. The place can be pinpointed on a map, the depths charted. While my story's setting is romantic, I was surrounded by things that can be rationally explained. The Navy is masterful in this regard.

As for the irrational, I am reluctant to relegate my experiences to the category of "encounters with the supernatural." It wasn't a guardian angel or a protective spirit or the ghost of a doomed sailor. None of that.

It's possible that a prank had been played on me, or a new form of technology was being experimented with in my immediate vicinity. I doubt the likelihood of either but I don't discount them, because I had played a starring role in one of my shipmate's encounters with the "unknown."



BECKY RODRIGUEZ | INK-SKETCH.TUMBLR.COM

My shipmates were nothing more than depositories for memories to sustain the illusion that we had something to come back to, which none of us did.

One day while cleaning out a locker on the boat deck, I discovered a device that looked like a cross between a bellows and a bicycle pump. The old salt I was working with told me it was a manual foghorn that was used in the motor whaleboat in foggy weather conditions. It was a throwback to the old Navy when boats weren't equipped with electrical systems. I tested it out and it made a horrible squealing sound like an animal being bludgeoned to death. This convinced my supervisor to throw it away, but I had plans for the sinister-sounding device.

That night, while a new recruit was standing aft lookout, I went up on the helo deck and sounded the horn. The noise blasted across the fantail like a banshee howling on the moors. I didn't stick around. I took the device and retreated to the boat deck. By the time I made it back to the bridge, the aft lookout had already reported "strange, animal sounds." I had a laugh with the boatswain's mate of the watch, who was in on the joke. The next day, it was all the fucking new guy could talk about. He no longer attributed the sounds to an animal, but to a witch, a sea hag.

*

I do not understand what I saw that night, and while I am not always comfortable with the limits of my understanding, this is an exception.

I do know that after that night I never felt alone when I was on watch. The wake lost its power over me. I no longer felt compelled to climb over the lifelines and put myself in a situation where a slippery deck, a fraying line, or a flimsy wire would send me tumbling into the sea, tossed into the frenzy of the wake, tangled in cords and weighted down by steel-toed boots, never to be seen nor heard from again.

Instead, I focused on the places my future would carry me. Sometimes my eyes would drift, as they still do, to the stars, searching for something I cannot name.

–Jim Ruland

MY SEVENTY-THIRD COLUMN FOR RAZORCAKE BY BEN SNAKEPIT

GUILTY pleasures

-OR-

SHITTY BANDS THAT I ACTUALLY ENJOY IN A NON-IRONIC WAY DESPITE THEIR SHITTINESS.

1) RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE. THE MUSICAL EQUIVALENT OF A PLASTIC GUY FAWKES MASK, BUT SOME OF THOSE RIFFS ARE KINDA SICK.

2) CRADLE OF FILTH. IT'S LIKE TOTALLY THE MOST EVIL THING THEY SELL AT HOT TOPIC.

3) SKRILLEX. I KNOW IT'S SUPER-HIP YOUNG PERSON MUSIC THAT SOUNDS LIKE A DYING FAX MACHINE, BUT IT'S STILL PRETTY COOL.

4) THE PRESIDENTS OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA. THE WORST LYRICS EVER IN THE HISTORY OF MUSIC MEETS A PRETTY AWESOME GUITAR TONE.

5) UNIFORM CHOICE. WHEN PAT DUBAR BROKE EDGE, HE FORMED THE BAND "MIND FUNK" WITH THE DRUMMER OF CELTIC FROST AND THE DUDE THAT GOT KICKED OUT OF NIRVANA.

6) DEICIDE. APPARENTLY, "EVIL" IS JUST ANOTHER WORD FOR "SLOPPY" BUT WHEN I WAS A LITTLE KID THAT FIRST ALBUM WAS KINDA SCARY.

7) FISHBONE. FUCK YOU FISHBONE IS AWESOME.

8) THE DISCOCKS. IMAGINE IF AN ALIEN CULTURE FOUND ONLY A DISCHARGE RECORD AND A COCKSPARRER RECORD AND DECIDED TO FORM A PUNK BAND. IT SOUNDS MUCH WORSE THAN YOU WOULD THINK.

9) DREAM THEATER. I KNOW ITS JUST "FAITH NO MORE FOR WIMPS" BUT THE ALBUM "AWAKE" IS KINDA GOOD.

10) VENOM. THE FATHERS OF SATANIC METAL HAVE A SONG CALLED "TEACHER'S PET" AND RIDE A HONDA MOTORCYCLE ON STAGE.

BONUS: EVERY BAND I'VE EVER BEEN IN. JUST WHO THE FUCK DO I THINK I AM, ANYWAY? MY OPINIONS ARE NO MORE VALID THAN ANYONE ELSE'S.

BEN SNAKEPIT@GMAIL.COM

Shh! Places, everyone!
SURPRISE!
GASP
RAZORCAKE
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
tsk, a surprise party? How embarrassing. I'm not a 5 year old, Y'know
RAZORCAKE
Oh, stop being such an apathetic teenager. Put on a party hat! Have fun!
HMPH
RAZORCAKE
Oh my god. Didn't I just say I'm not a 5 year old? UGH.
BIRTH DAY ROCK STAR
RAZORCAKE
ok grumpy, why don't you cut the cake?
FINE.
RAZORCAKE
15
CLUNK
RAZORCAKE
15
Really?! A RAZOR in the CAKE? Real mature.
RAZORCAKE
Get it?
15
Thanks for NOTHING. I'm going to my room.
RAZORCAKE
STOMP STOMP SLAM
15
Oh well, more RAZORCAKE for us!
Is it gluten free?
15
HAPPY 15TH BIRTHDAY, RAZORCAKE!
www.lizphinneypower.com

I had the useless superhero ability to summon the titles of one-hit wonders.

Spirit in the Sky

Everyone hates where they grow up. If you don't, you end up becoming One of Those People Who Stay. Although neither of us had left Long Island for anything more than family vacations, Ali and I had running in our blood. We felt it there, thinning the blood like heart medication, preparing us for warmer climates in places not overrun by douchebags.

Long Island wasn't the *worst* place to grow up, but it certainly wasn't the best. There was something about the high tension wires weaving their way across the homogenous two-story developments that made Long Islanders—as a people—high tension. You could see it in their faces, taut from anger at the slow-moving line at the Burger King, grinding their teeth and using the word "faggot" freely and uncomfortably often. The word "faggot" is practically the Long Island cheer. It is shouted at sporting events, school functions, and special occasions. Any pedestrian is a potential faggot, walking around, spreading their fag ways like some kind of faggy biped. On a simple bike ride from point A to point B, one can expect to have the word faggot shouted at them five or six times regardless of gender identity or sexual preference, as well as anticipate at least one open cup of soda being hurled at them.

Ali started wearing a helmet on the bike rides to her job at the mall. She said it was for bike safety, but anyone who has ever had a can of beer thrown at them from a moving car can tell you it will take a chunk of scalp with it. I made the conscious decision to ride only at night, joining the world of Morlocks and creeping things that party when the sun goes down. I felt rebellious that way, kidding myself into believing I owned the streets, that I was not just afraid of being jumped by high school dudes out for a joyride in their dad's Miata. In spite of my Ponyboy toughguy façade and the unicorn stickers on Ali's helmet, deep down we both knew this was no way to live.

I was lucky to know Ali. We had seen each other at parties for years, nodding in recognition the way people do when you admire someone's concept haircut or Crass button, but feel too lame to say anything. We finally became friends, and for months we met up at diners to drink syrupy 3:00 AM coffee and talk about how weird it was that we were *twenty-one, dude*. That's almost twenty-three, which is ancient—the same age of the dudes I dated at nineteen, or the guys who were living in the punk house when Ali moved in. They had seemed so old then. Twenty-one was old enough. We'd *never* make it to twenty-three.

We were at a diner and seated in the booth behind us were two guys who looked like they had just gotten out of work at a BMW dealership: ties untied, sleeves rolled up, letting their hair down and cutting loose after a long day of selling luxury sedans. Ali and I were sullen, moody, brightly-colored post-teens, the veritable furniture of late-night dining establishments. Bookended, these two looked out of place for the three in the morning vibe. From the sudden quiet at their booth, we sensed that we had just been noticed and braced ourselves for the inevitable hate crime.

"Are you guys in a band?" the shorter one said—drunk, stoned, or spiritually wasted by a dead-end commission sales job.

"Yes," Ali said, confidently, as though we had just gotten back from our first European tour.

"That's cool," said the other, a tall guy with a dated mushroom cut. "What do you play?"

Ali didn't waver: "I play drums. She sings."

"Yeah, I sing," I said, bobbing my head like an agreeable parakeet.

"That's cool, that's cool," said Loose Tie. "I'm in a band, too."

"What's your band called?" Ali asked.

"Magic Beneath The Earth."

Coffee flooded the flap of skin that keeps food from falling into your lungs and I started to gag. "That's a really great band name," I choked.

"Thanks!" said Loose Tie. "What's *your* band called?"

"Spirit In The Sky." Not even a split second of thought had brought that name to the forefront of my consciousness; I had not recently heard the Norman Greenbaum song on the radio, nor had I been dreaming of the feedback airplane roar of the opening guitar riff. I just had the useless superhero ability to summon the titles of one-hit wonders for a laugh at someone else's expense. I was the Aquaman of record nerds.

"Dude!" said Mushroom Cut. "I totally saw you guys play!"

Ali and I looked at each other. "Uh, really?"

"Yeah, at that fuckin' place! Last month!" Mushroom Cut was really getting into it.

"Which gig?" I asked. "We play so many, you know?"

"That fuckin' place. On Route 110. Fuckin' what's it called?"

"The Crazy Donkey?" I said. All Long Island bars are either named after somebody's Irish uncle or an adjective describing an animal, although it seems you can't walk down Main Street of any town without seeing ten different places named Paddy Shaleighleigh's or The Filthy Frog.

"*Yeah*! The fuckin' Crazy Donkey!"

"It must have been that show we played with all those other bands," I said, wide-eyed at the non-existent recognition.

"Dude! Yeah! You guys fuckin' rocked!" said Mushroom Cut. "You put on a great fuckin' show!"

"Thanks," Ali said, almost blushing. "We try to give it our all, you know."

"Nah, bro," said Mushroom. "You guys fuckin' *got something*."

"You know what you gotta do?" said Loose Tie.

"What?" we asked. What could it possibly be that we had to do?

"You guys gotta get a fuckin' van. Right? So you fuckin' *get a van*, and you fuckin' drive down to Florida. Then you fuckin' play some shows. What the fuck's that called?" He turned to the one with the bad haircut, expecting him to pick up the slack for the synapses misfiring in his brain.

"Hmmm, what *is* that called?" I said, looking around as though for inspiration. "A tour? Is that called a tour?"

"Yeah! A fuckin' *tour*! You guys gotta *tour*."

"Thanks," said Ali. "I think we will."

"You guys gotta get out there and *tour*," Mushroom Cut said, trying out the words on his tongue, taking them for a spin like a test drive in a new BMW Z3.

"You guys got something. You guys are gonna *make it*," said Loose Tie.

"Look, we don't wanna bother you anymore. But you guys are fuckin' awesome," Mushroom said. "You're gonna make it. You just gotta tour. I'm serious."

STEVE THUESON

It was almost more jarring to be ferociously complimented by a pair of bro-dude strangers than to be harassed.

"You ladies have a good night now." They walked off, stumbling into the rounded glass case that held the pastries.

Ali and I looked at each other.

It was almost more jarring to be ferociously complimented by a pair of bro-dude strangers than to be harassed. Moreover, maybe those guys knew something we didn't. Maybe they were prophets, sensing the white light, white heat streaming from our auras. We decided that night as we frantically transcribed the conversation on a paper placemat that those two drunken salesmen were right. What we had wasn't a friendship. It was a band. A band named Spirit In The Sky that didn't play any instruments and one thing was for certain: we desperately needed to tour.

–Cassie J. Sneider

Born/Dead at Alley Katz, Richmond, Va. 4/27/05

Chris Boarts Larson Photo Column - Born/Dead

Chris Boarts Larson, www.slugandlettuce.net

Oakland's Born/Dead brought together the anarcho/peace punk style of bands like Aus Rotten with a distinctly Bay Area hardcore punk slant that was both super catchy and charged with high energy and power.

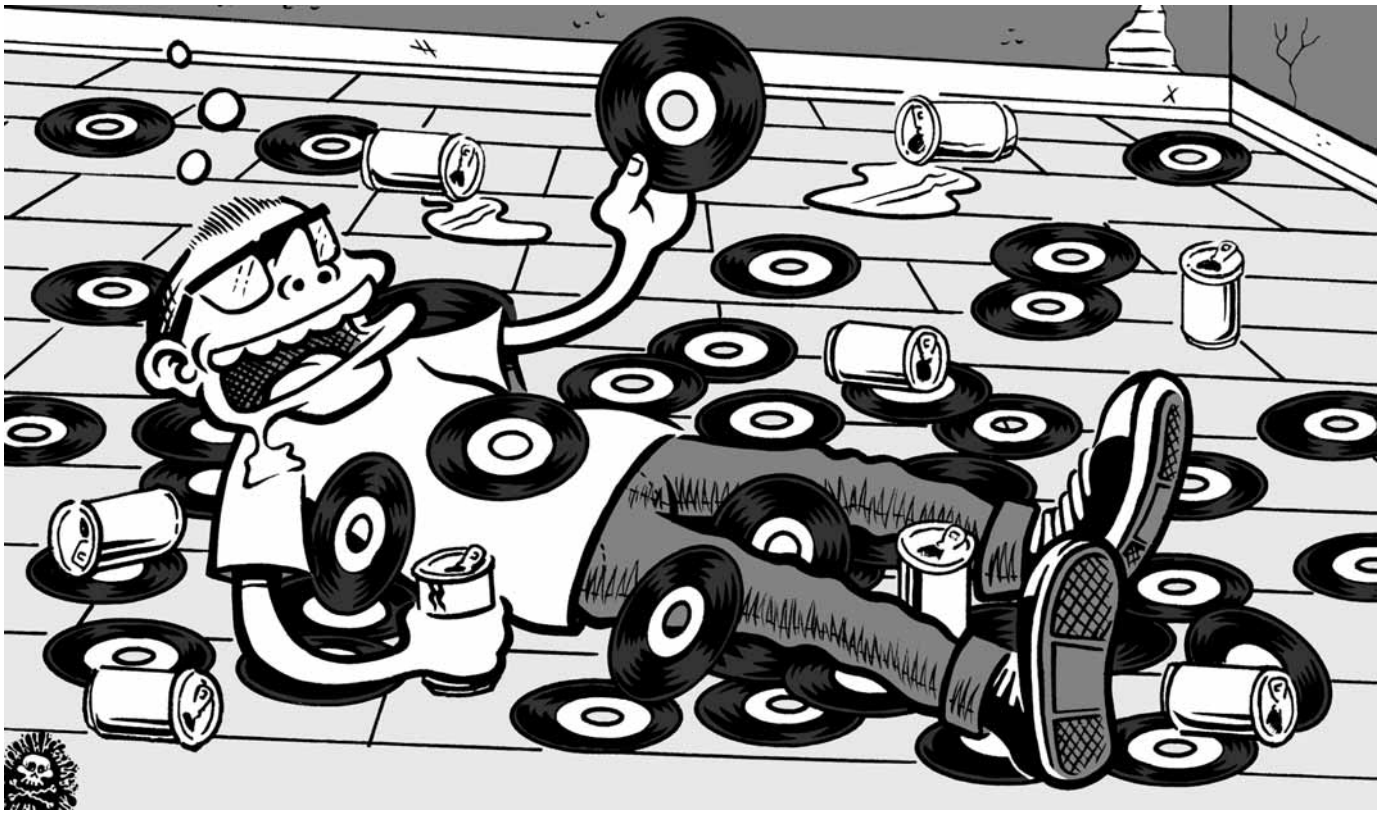
The mid-'00s was an awesome time filled with great bands and lots of traveling; Born/Dead were right in the middle of that for me. When I got their full length *Our Darkest Fears Now Haunt Us* to review, it became an instant favorite. By the time I went to Austin, Tex. for Chaos In Tejas in June 2004, I was obsessed. When I found out they were playing a house show before the fest started, I couldn't have been more stoked.

This photo of Born/Dead was taken when they played with Kylesa, Sword, and Are You Fucking Serious? The show was five dollars.

**Shirt on!
Beers out!
Let's rock!**

WHAT RAZORCAKE MEANS TO ME IN FORTY-FIVE 45s OR LESS

I don't usually "do" Black Friday. It sounds altogether too righteous and funky. However, when I found out the local pre-recorded musical entertainment emporium was selling 45s for 45¢ this year, I braved the maddening throngs of pillbox-hat-wielding Furby hoarders, and picked out forty-five 45¢ 45s ((none of which, alas, were by the Forty-Fives)). Curiously, I've been told that this is the fifteenth anniversary issue of *Razorcake,* a magazine whose mighty ethos is flawlessly embedded in the slogan on the one piece of *Razorcake* swag I own: A black T-shirt with "I ♥ DRINKING BEER AND LISTENING TO RECORDS" scrawled across it in hot pink letters. And what, pray tell, does fifteen years times, say, a threesome, equal? THAT'S RIGHT! FORTY-FIVE! Thus, without further ado, I have decided that I could show no greater love for *The 'Cake* in this issue than to put on my "I ♥ DRINKING BEER AND LISTENING TO RECORDS" SHIRT and GET DRUNK AND REVIEW ALL FORTY-FIVE 45-CENT 45s I GOT ON FRIDAY!! Enough preamble! Shirt on! Beers out! Let's rock! **Purple Wizard** *"BBQ":* I love Purple Wizard. They remind me of being potty-trained, when my reward for pooping was to finalize the ritual by spraying a lilac-colored can of Wizard™ air-freshener afterwards. That's not barbecue you smell, ma'am. It's lilacs and feces, the sounds of growing up. ***HIT!*** **/ Pure Country Gold**, *P.C.G.E.P.:* I wonder whom the budding genius was who thought up this cretinous fucking band name? I want to hire him to make me chicken sandwiches and alphabetize my Buck Owens records. ***HIT! /*** **Pleasure Kills**, *Mission Boy:* Hey, we played with this band at Insubordination Fest. I bought some buttons. My girlfriend at the time was like, "You only like that girl because she's in a band and plays guitar!" Point *being,* Grizelda? ***HIT!*** **/ Percy & The Gaolbirds**, *Who Can Help Me* EP: Everything on Bacchus or Dionysus always sucks, but this is pretty cool, probably because it was recorded in 1966, when electricity was different. ***HIT!*** / **Monos/Totallies**, Split EP: One of these bands should change their name to The Tangy Pieces of Fart. The other one I don't like as much. ***MISS!*** **/ Young Identities** EP: I want this and my Social Unrest 45 to fight. What the fuck is wrong with that guy's voice? Oh, he's from Australia. Thank god. ***HIT, SORT OF!*** / **Young Identities**, *New Trends* EP: This guy's voice didn't sound any better in 1980 than it did in 1979. But wait, there're handclaps! I didn't think the settlers brought handclapping to the Antipodes until the late '90s. Weird. I also think they mugged the back cover of the third Joe Jackson album and made off with its letters. ***HIT!*** **/ Lover!**, *Home Alone:* How come when other people record solo stuff it sounds like real music and when I do it, it sounds like some manner of therapy session for people who lost part of their cranium trying to smell the underside of a moving lawnmower? ***HIT! /*** **The Vermin Poets** EP: My rule of thumb with any recording upon which Billy Childish appears is to take it off as soon as he starts singing about his fucking dad. So far, so good. Sounds like what the Rutles would have sounded like if they parodied Billy Childish instead of the Beatles. You gotta admit, you didn't think of a song title better than "It Seems I've Gone and Died" today, did you? DID YOU??? ***HIT! /*** **Tortured Tongues**, *Let Me Down*: What the fuck? This band should be called "Feces Cyclone." ***MISS! /*** **Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb,** *I'm Haunted:* Inner Ear Studios is still a thing? Weird. I give this one a ***HIT!*** on the basis of the title "(I Don't Wanna Be A) Low Hangin' Fruit" alone. / **The Saturday People**, *Slipping through Your Fingertips:* Okay, I—no shit—threw this into the street. ***MIIIIIIIIISSSSS!!! /*** **Thee Shams**, *Be Coming Home:* Kind of sounds like something they'd play at the end of *Saturday Night Live* when all the cast and guests are hanging out on stage acting like they're friends. ***MISS! /*** **Superdestroyers**, *Slave to the Urge:* B-side is decent and sounds like Head. A-side fails to coax an even-halfway decent Lord Alfred Hayes reference from me. ***TIE!*** / **Snuggle!/ No High 5s**, Split*:* I'd rather snuggle with the Hi-Fives, who were great, than listen to either of these bands again. Unless it was at gunpoint, because that would be rad. ***MISS!*** / **Stupor Stars**, *Poison Arrows:* It's been a while since I contemplated Pelado Records in any meaningful sense, and this record is fifteen years old. I think history will judge them reasonably kindly. Hell, I'd pay NINETY cents for this record! ***HIT!*** / **Marked Men**, *On:* One song is called "On" and the other "The Other Side," and I can't be the only jackass who kept flipping the record over trying to figure out exactly WHAT was "On" "The Other Side." Congratulations, you just Who's-On-First-ed a great record into the 45¢ bin! ***HIT! /*** **No Tomorrow Boys**, *Animal Eyes:* I really dig that song "(You Gotta) Romeo It." It's like the Teen Idols before you got sick of the Teen Idols! ***HIT! /*** **Mojomatics**, *Love Wild Fever:* The A-side sounds like my favorite Mojomatics song, the name of which has been completely obliterated from my memory right now. The B-side sounds like "Gypsies, Tramps & Thieves" or something. ***HIT ANYWAY! /*** **Los Cacahuetes**, *Wild Women:* The insert inside this record indicates that these guys are labelmates of a band called the Sinalco Bums, whom I've never heard, but own one of their posters ((the one with the Silver Surfer chick)). This record also has some kind of music on it. ***EH! /*** **Lamps**, *"Niels Bohr Was an Excellent Ping Pong Player":* Sure, I buy records only for the song titles! People used to buy *Penthouse* for the letters; cut me some slack here! B-side is "I've Been on a Lot of Camels." ***MISS! /*** **Social Task**, *1979 Studio Recordings EP:* Release your recordings in 1979, your legacy lives on forever. Release the same recordings in 2008, and all people notice is how unreadable your liner notes are. ***HIT, of a sort! /*** **Les Hormones**, *Peggy EP:* "Side E?" "Side F?" I don't have to take this shit. Nothing newsworthy ever happens in Paris anyway. ***HIT, but I can't really tell any more! /*** **Von Zippers**, *Nothing Can Bring Me Down!:* I love the Von Zippers but this recording lacks the band's trademark thickness, and who wants a skinny zipper? That implies a failing of manhood. They also added a keyboard player and these are like soul covers or something. They should change their name to the Van Zippers now. ***MISS! /*** **The Splinters**, *Carcass:* I bought this one because they were girls and because the dude from the Bare Wires produced it. It shoulda been the guy from the Bare Wires playing and four girls producing. ***MISS! /*** **The Right Now**, *7 to 10:* I think the fucking Short Circus played heavier shit on *The Electric Company.* ***MISS! /*** **Radar Eyes**, *Best Friends:* I'm glad Hozac had their ear to the street, or this generation might have missed their own Modern English. Keep up the good work! ***Okay, fine: HIT. /*** **Remenbers**, *It's:* This sounds like my head



ALEX BARRETT

This record also has some kind of music on it.

feels right now. ***HIT, maybe*** / **The Right Now**, *He Used to Be:* You again??? Here's something I owe you!!! WHAM!!! ***MISS! /*** **Richard Peterson with the Young Fresh Fellows**, *Mathisization:* When I'm this drunk I don't want to hear music that sounds like it's from a 1970s TV show, I kind of want the whole 1970s TV show itself. Fuck you for not being *The Rockford Files*! ***MISS! /*** **Plastiques**, *Shoplifting:* As a rule, I like anything on which Martin Savage plays. He knows it's 5:19 in the morning and expedites the process accordingly. ***HIT!/*****Launderettes**, *The Beat Dropped:* These humans are masters of their craft and should be sniffed appreciatively, like a dryer-fresh sweatsock. ***HIT! /*** **dB's**, *Picture Sleeve:* The only other dB's record I ever bought was the "Black & White" 45, in 1981. I thought they were a bunch of wimps. Thirty-four years and forty-five cents later, my opinion remains essentially static. ***MISS!!! /*** **Brotherhood Of Electricity**, *Invisible:* I bought this record for the Negative Approach cover; didn't quite figure on them being a garage band with a fricking KEYBOARD. *Hee hee! The modern world is fun!* ***HIT! /*** **Barbary Coasters**, *The Barbary Stomp:* This music has universal appeal, which is much too heavy a concept for me to contemplate at this late hour. ***HIT! /*** **Thee Dead Clodettes**, *EP:* I have no idea what you're doing, but STOP IT RIGHT NOW. Do you know what time it is??? ***MISS! /*** **Detonations**, *Spy You in a Magazine:* This makes me want to rub flaming pornography on my penis. Usually I want to rub my flaming penis on pornography, so I applaud them for switching it up a bit. ***HIT! /*** **Chimptations**, *Monkeyshines:* Let's face it: It is the ultimate aim of anyone who ever fancied themselves a pop songwriter in any way, shape, or form to pen tunes for a faux chimpanzee act *a la* Lancelot Link And The Evolution Revolution. As usual, Travis Ramin wins. No wonder you don't hear much about Darin Rafaelli these days! ***HIT! /*** **Fvses**, *Sex Crimes:* On behalf of all ancient Roman engravers everywhere, I'd like to thank this band for making it easy for them to be immortalized on the granite arches above museum doorways by pre-converting that pesky "U" to a "V." ***HIT, but mostly because of the Gary Numan cover /*** **Gito Gito Hustler**, *What's My...?!:* Japanese girls can do anything they want to me at 5:57 in the morning. ***HIT! /*** **Flash Express**, *Who Stole the Soul?* I almost got a John Spencer Blues Explosion 45 instead of this one. I probably wouldn't've noticed. Burbank Soul! ***THIS RECORD REJECTS THE BABYLON OF HIT AND MISS! NYAAH! /*** **Jackson 8**, *"Who Said It Gots to Be Good!!:* This has just as much chance to become the next *Pollywog Stew* as *Pollywog Stew* had at being the first *Pollywog Stew.* So. There's that. ***HIT? MISS? JACKSON 8-BALL SAYS 'BETTER NOT TELL YOU NOW! /*** **Easys**, *I Want You Back:* Someday I shall retire to a remote island paradise where my hut shall be thatched largely from the band members' hair. ***HIT? /*** **Headache City**, *Teenage Grease:* They need more horsies but other than that they're okay. ***HIT! /*** **Hipshakes**, *You Make Me Malfunction:* That's cool, brah. Just SHUT THE FUCK UP and let me get some sleep! ***HIT? I'LL SAY WHATEVER YOU WANT, JUST MAKE IT STOP!!!***

CONCLUSION:
Hey, when do 78's go on sale?

Love
–Nørb

An all-action burrito, hold the bullshit, if you will.

Rock in Peace, Philthy Animal

In the world of full-on music, there have been a handful of full-on drummers who have more than carried their weight. I'm talking about the ones who walk the walk without having to talk up a single damn thing. An all-action burrito, hold the bullshit, if you will.

On November 11, 2015 the rock'n'roll world lost one of its all-action heroes of the drum kit: Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor, AKA Philthy Phil. He was sixty-one years old.

Growing up as a skinhead type near Leeds, U.K., in his teens Philthy had his share of street fights—often landing him at the police station where his increasingly upset father picked him up. Remembering that he used to bang on the pots and pans as a wee lad in the kitchen—like a lot of drummers did as toddlers—Philthy's father brought home a beat-up snare drum and told his son, "Here, ya bastard! If you're gonna hit something, hit this!" He enrolled his son in a couple of music lessons at Leeds Music College.

Philthy often jokingly remarked in interviews that his inspiration for the drums was his father's command to play them. Going to the lessons, Philthy learned some of the drumming basics from a ninety-year-old gentleman who was a drummer in WWI. The two got along quite well and Philthy continued taking lessons with him, discovering he had a natural capacity for learning his craft. Influences ranged from the jazz records that his father played endlessly at home to the British Invasion releases that his older sister owned. Interestingly enough, it was Bernard Purdie—one of Motown's most famous session drummers—who had a lasting impression on Philthy. Young Philthy had no idea he was about to begin a rock'n'roll journey of ginourmous proportions and leave a lasting impression of his own that still resonates with drummers today.

Bassist and frontman Lemmy Kilmister, fresh outta his stint with Hawkwind in May 1975, put together a three-piece called Bastard with guitarist Larry Wallis and drummer Lucas Fox. The band's name was changed to Motörhead. Philthy joined as Motörhead's permanent drummer, replacing Fox during the band's first recordings in September 1975—recordings that were to become the later-released *On Parole* LP.

This all happened when Philthy was twenty-one. He played in one hell of a band to professionally cut his teeth on at that raucous age, wouldn't you say? A deal with a record company soon proved regrettable as they refused to release *On Parole*, citing its lack of "commercial potential." Within the following year, the band switched out guitarists, solidifying Philthy's old pal "Fast" Eddie Clarke to the Motörhead fold, and the new lineup started to flesh out its niche rather quickly. But things weren't going so well—one main reason was they had a label sitting on their full-length. Gig as they did, fans of the band wanted to listen to their record!

Friday, April 1, 1977 was a huge turning point for the most powerful trio. The band was ready to call it a day after a show at the Marquee in London. They hit up Chiswick Records owner Jim Carroll to finance a recording of the last show for posterity. Because the Marquee wanted an exorbitant amount of money for a live recording at their venue, Carroll offered to finance two days of studio time for the band to record a single for him that Saturday and Sunday. That same night they drove straight to the studio after the Marquee gig.

Being the well-oiled machine they were—due to constant playing the past year and a half—Lemmy, Fast Eddie, and Philthy tracked eleven songs (*with* vocals!) by late Saturday night. When Carroll came by to check in on the progress, he was impressed and immediately agreed to pay out for more studio time for the band to finish a full-length album. Their self-titled album was released on Chiswick August 21, 1977. What is known as Motörhead's "classic lineup" was spawned unto the earth, continually blowing the minds of listeners worldwide.

It wasn't until the recording of *Overkill*, the second LP, that Philthy discovered his hell-bent approach to the Motörhead rhythm section: the double kick drums. In the 2005 Motörhead documentary *The Guts and the Glory* Taylor says:

> *"I always wanted to play two bass drums, but I always said to myself, "No, I'm not gonna be one of these wankers who goes on stage and has two bass drums and never even fuckin' plays 'em both. Not until I can play 'em." So I got this other bass drum… you know, just sit there going (beats both feet on the ground, laughing) basically, like running, or something like that. And that's how the song 'Overkill' came. I was… trying to get my coordination right, when Eddie and Lemmy walked in, and I was just about to stop and they went, "No! No! Don't stop! Keep going! Keep going!" And that was how 'Overkill' got written."*

Motörhead's blistering locomotive pummeling was on, and the March 1979 release of *Overkill* delivered the band's breakthrough album to an ever-amassing fanbase, comprised of both punk and heavy metal fans.

The band released their third record later that year in October, six months after their second LP. Although *Bomber* remains a strong release (for me and hoards of other fans), the guys in the band thought it would've been even stronger had they been able to work the songs out on the road and had a more firm hand at the production desk. Nonetheless, *Bomber* faired well for Motörhead and its fans, readying their first U.S. tour invasion with their fourth monster LP *Ace of Spades.*

Playing more like a greatest hits album, *Ace of Spades* planted Motörhead's foot in any nonbeliever's ass, proving that they were anything but a passing fancy that slipped through the cracks at the record label's signing table. They weren't going anywhere but forward, and when the LP was released in November 1980, they geared up to blaze a tour trail that brought them here to the States in April of '81, for the very first time.

Funny thing was—before they even got started blazing that tour trail—Philthy broke his neck while fucking around with one of their roadies. The story goes that some big guy who lifted up Philthy above his head like a set of weights became unbalanced, and Philthy hit the ground, landed on his head, and busted his neck. Ever the resilient scrapper, after being laid up for a bit Philthy continued on with the tour early in '81 with a neck brace. You can catch a shot of the infirmed Philthy on the cover of the Motörhead / Girlschool 10" EP *St. Valentine's Day Massacre*, in which labelmates Girlschool and Motörhead cover each other's songs. Because Philthy was off drum duty in December 1980 when the EP was recorded, Girlschool drummer Denise Dufort tracked all three songs. Injury also plagued Philthy a couple years later when he broke his hand on some guy's face he socked. That story about his drumstick being taped to his hand with gaffing tape so he could play? Yeah, that's why.

After the *Ace of Spades* tour in late March/early April 1981, the band did a small run through a couple cities in the U.K. and Ireland, aptly calling it the *Short Sharp Pain*

CODEY RICHARDS

On November 11, 2015 the rock'n'roll world lost one of its all-action heroes of the drum kit: Phil "Philthy Animal" Taylor

in the Neck tour in reference to Philthy's neck injury mishap. Songs recorded during these dates went on to be part of the band's first live record: Motörhead's *No Sleep 'til Hammersmith*, heralded by some as one of the greatest live albums, ever. If the frenzied roar of Motörhead doesn't do it for you with this live release, especially with the pace that Philthy keeps the band, you're obviously sustaining little to no pulse, or are dead altogether. It's essential stuff here, folks. The classic lineup at what was probably their most potent live era—just as *It's Alive* was the pinnacle live LP from the classic lineup of the Ramones. Definitely one for your collection. Actually, both of those are.

Philthy Phil went on to record with Motörhead on the next couple of records—1982's *Iron Fist* and 1983's *Another Perfect Day*—with great fan response. He then bowed out for a couple of years and returned to the band in 1987 for *Rock and Roll*, 1991's *1916*, and to track a cut for the *March ör Die* record in 1992. While none of these later albums that Philthy cut drums on are slouches in the least, they somehow get overlooked when it comes to his tenure with the band. Some fans say it was because of the revolving members joining after he and Fast Eddie left, then Philthy returning back to a different guitarist/guitarists. Other fans say that the band itself was simply evolving.

Whatever people's opinions, I say that the band's entire catalog speaks for itself in volumes, classic lineup era up until the present. While the current band lineup with drummer Mikkey Dee (who's been Motörhead's drummer for well over twenty years now) *more* than holds its own, the classic lineup featuring Philthy on the kit has always held a special spot in my heart. Maybe it's a drummer thing for me, but how do you explain the other legions of fans who aren't drummers? You can't. He was just *that* great alongside his rock'n'roll brothers in arms.

Rock in peace, Philthy Animal.

–Designated Dale
designateddale@yahoo.com

BITE THE CACTUS FIGHTIN' WORDS

BY ADRIAN CHI

DO YOU EVER NOTICE SOMETHING VERY TROUBLING ABOUT THE WORLD, ONLY TO FIND OUT THAT THAT TROUBLING THING, OR IDEA, IS COMMON ENOUGH TO HAVE ITS OWN WORD?

UGHHH I'M SO SICK OF THESE STUPID MOVIES!
WHY WOULD YOU EXPECT ANYTHING FROM HOLLYWOOD OTHER THAN THIS HETERO-NORMATIVE BULLSHIT?
HM... YOU'RE RIGHT. WHY ARE WE EVEN WATCHING THIS?
CUZ SCARLETT JOHANSSON

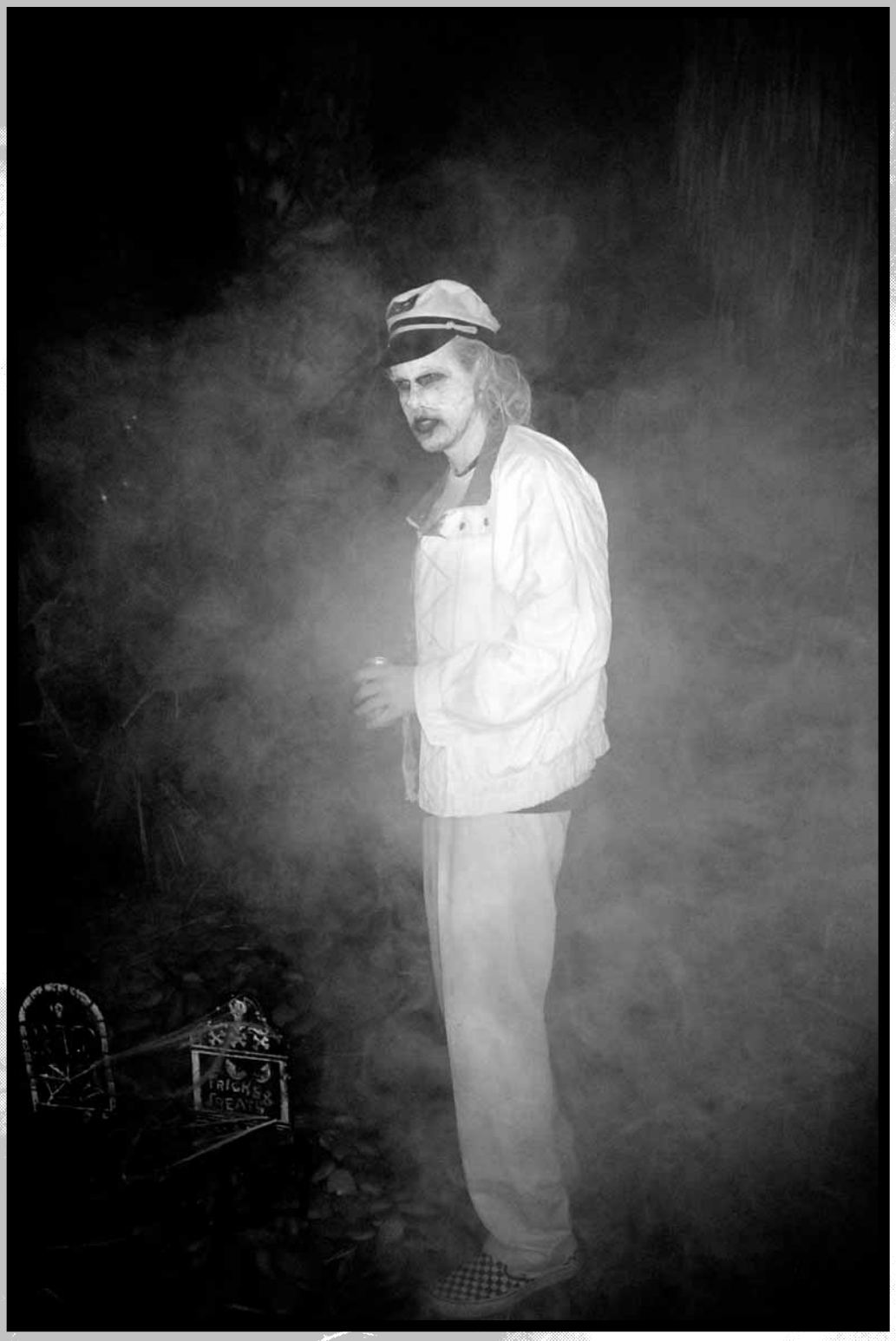
ONCE YOU UNDERSTAND IT AS A "REAL" THING, YOU START NOTICING IT EVERYWHERE SOMETIMES EVEN IN YOUR OWN THOUGHTS, ACTIONS, OR INACTIONS...

DARREN WILSON FOUND NOT GUILTY
WHAAAT?!! WHY ISN'T HE GOING TO JAIL?!
WELL... SYSTEMIC RACISM IS A REAL THING
WOW... A WHOLE LOTTA MALE PRIVILEGE GOIN' ON
YEP. THAT'S A REAL THING
SO, WHY DIDN'T YOU EVER PURSUE RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER WOMEN?
UMM... I THINK... IT'S CALLED...
INTERNALIZED HOMOPHOBIA?

ON ONE HAND, IT'S SUPER DEPRESSING THAT THESE THINGS ARE COMMON ENOUGH TO HAVE THEIR OWN WORDS... ON THE **OTHER** HAND... WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST SO WE CAN HAVE A **LANGUAGE** OF **RESISTANCE.**

THERE ARE SO MANY OF THESE WORDS. THE LIST IS NEVERENDING...
"GENDER BINARY"
"HISTORICAL ERASURE"
"WHITE PRIVILEGE"
NEIGHBOR'S DOG
BUT THERE IS ROOM TO MAKE OUR OWN WORDS AND DEFINITIONS ...SOMETHING I LEARNED VOLUNTEERING AT QUEER ROCK CAMP.
I'VE HEARD OF A LOT OF "SAFE SPACES" BUT WHAT'S A "SAFER SPACE"?
DO YOU KNOW WHAT A "MENINIST" IS BUDDY?
A SAFER SPACE IS AN OPENING OF THE DOORS FOR CHANGE AND EVOLUTION AND COMMITTING TO ALWAYS BE ABLE TO DO BETTER. TO ME, A "SAFE" SPACE IS REALLY IMPOSSIBLE.
A PERFECTLY "SAFE SPACE" IS NOT POSSIBLE BECAUSE OF HOW PERVASIVE THESE IDEAS ARE IN OUR CULTURE
YOU'RE A GOOD PERSON
YOU **CAN'T DENY** THESE THINGS EXIST AND EFFECT US EVEN IF WE DON'T WANT THEM TO.

WE NEED THESE WORDS SO WE CAN ORGANIZE AND TALK ABOUT HOW TO FIGHT THESE VERY OPPRESIVE IDEAS. LANGUAGE CAN BE EMPOWERING - IT'S SUPER COOL. CAPITALISM, COLONIALISM, RACISM, SEXISM, XENOPHOBIA... NOT COOL AT ALL. BUT THE TOOLS THEY USE, WE CAN USE BETTER. WE JUST GOTTA PAY ATTENTION.



Dan Monick's Photo Page

The Truth Is Out There, Los Angeles, Oct. 31, 2015

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Latecomer - "S/T" 1 Sided LP

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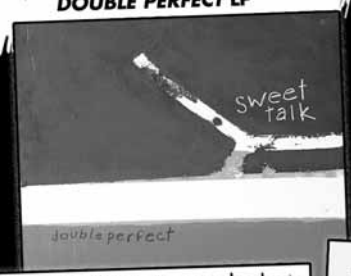
SWEET TALK
DOUBLE PERFECT LP



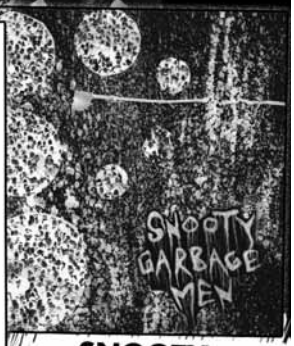
DON HOWLAND
LIFE IS A NIGHTMARE LP

MANATEEES
CROC N MY POCKET LP

OBNIII[S]
WORTH A LOT OF MONEY LP

EXHAUSTION
PHASED OUT 12" EP

UNIFORM
PERFECT WORLD LP



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CHICO SIMIO #53

"A POEM FOR FALLING"

HERE WE ARE
AGAIN, OLD FRIEND
JUST WHEN WE THOUGHT
WE WERE SAFE
DOWN WE GO ONCE MORE—

ONE DAY WE WILL LEARN THE TRICK
TO GROW OUR OWN WINGS
AND BE FREE—

BUT WHO WILL CATCH US THIS TIME?

-ART.

Rachel Framingheddu's Photo Page

Harrison, Divers

PEOPLE HAVE HAD IT. THEY'VE HAD IT WITH THE GROSS COME-ONS, PICK-UP ARTISTS, LINES AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT IN THE STREETS, WORK AND PUBLIC VENUES.

WTNN

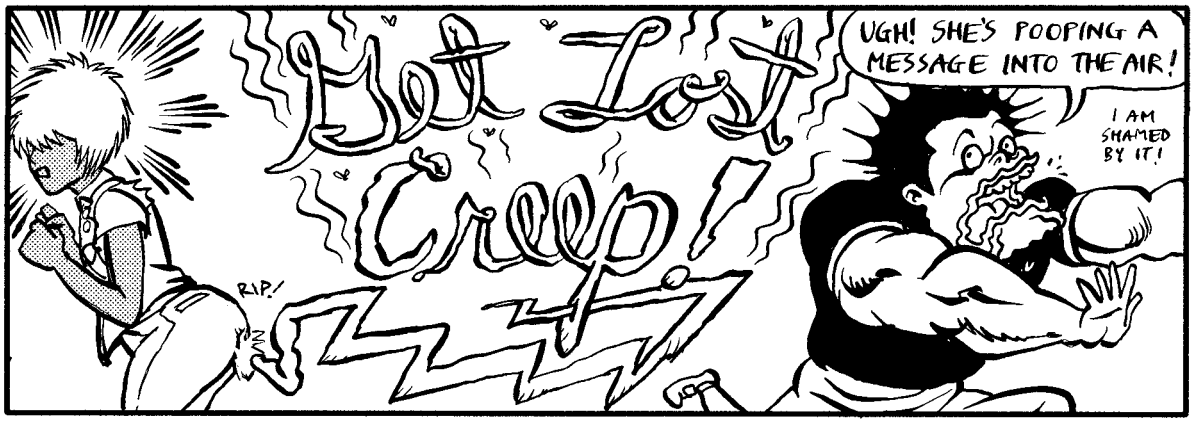
BY LUCKY NAKAZAWA

FOLD THIS COMIC INTO A CONDOM THAT YOU'LL NEVER HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY TO USE.

P.S. HAPPY NEW YEAR

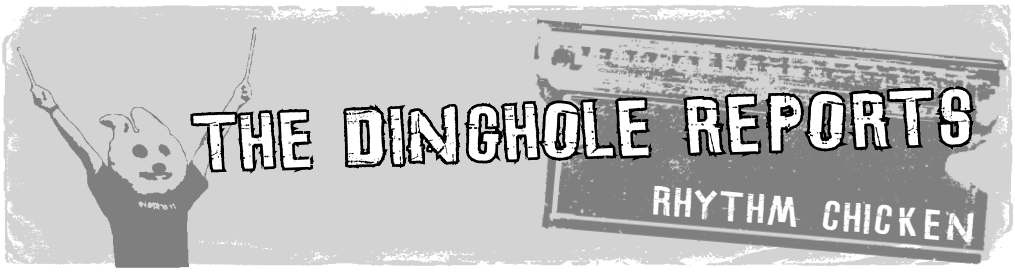
FOLDING COMIC JOKE FORMAT FROM DIRT FARM BY BEN GRASSEN

I WORKED WITH A GUY WHO LOVED THIS LINE. FYI IT DOESN'T WORK



CONGRATS TO RAZORCAKE'S QUINCEAÑERA! 15 YEARS! CALL ME IN 6 AND I'LL BUY YOU A DRINK.

KN 11/15



I had a beer in one hand and a bat in the other.

A Fine Slew

It was the early 2000s when I first got to know my friend Nate. He was a regular customer at a coffee shop I had just started working at. He seemed like a quirky fellow so we hit it off pretty well. Every day he would come in and try to weird me out a little bit more than the day before. I had just gotten back from my second year living in Poland—that and my years of punk rock activities had left me pretty much *un-weird-out-able.* But Nate kept trying. Soon enough I began throwing my own weirdness right back at him, and we soon became good friends. I could go on and on about how Nate is so very interestingly bizarre, but let's just say he's interestingly bizarre.

One extremely hung-over Sunday I was manning the coffee shop, when Nate came in and made it very clear that I absolutely *had to* come over to his house after work. I really didn't feel like doing anything that wasn't on my couch or in my bed that day, but I still stopped by after closing up the shop. There were plenty of my friends' cars there and it seemed like it was perhaps some kind of party. My head was pounding as I walked up to the front door. I was in no mood for a party. Why was it so important for *me* to attend?

Things seemed strangely quiet until I opened the door. A group of friends screamed, "*SURPRISE!!!"* I looked up and they were all hoisting up their drinks while a beer was thrust into my hung-over hand. My birthday was months away. I had no major event or achievement to warrant such a party. I really, really, really did not feel up to having a party at this particular moment, much less one where I seemed to be the focus of attention. Nate stepped up to me and shook my hand sternly while congratulating me. My head still pounding, I pulled the beer to my mouth and took a rather painful and confused gulp.

Other friends said, "Cheers!" as we all clinked beers. I waited till the initial formalities had passed before I finally asked, "Okay, what's going on? What is this?" Nate seemed a little shocked and asked, "Didn't you read the banner?" My fuzzy gaze finally looked up at the large banner across his living room wall. There it said my name in big letters, right underneath a phrase and word I did not really understand, "HAPPY QUINCEAÑERA!" Nate gave me a maniacal and fiendish glare as he bellowed out, "It's your *quinceañera party!"* I nodded my head and took another sip. I was tired, hung over, and confused.

Growing up decades ago in Green Bay, I never really had much exposure to Latino culture. I chose to learn German in high school and never took Spanish. Most of my Spanish was gained from *Sesame Street* and from more recent years learning "kitchen Spanish" on the job. After learning the Polish language and living in Poland for a while, I was *really* disconnected from Latin America. I had absolutely no idea what this was. Everyone seemed a little disappointed with my lack of response to my own quinceañera party. Finally, our friend Kaija, who had just returned from living in the Dominican Republic, pulled me aside and explained to me that a quinceañera celebrates a girl's fifteenth birthday as she passes into womanhood. In my hung-over state, Nate's attempt to weird me out had left me dumbfounded.

An hour later I had a beer in one hand and a bat in the other. I was blindfolded and swung the bat wildly above my head. A horse-shaped piñata hung from a tree in his front yard. One of my sharp blows landed directly on the horse's neck, cracking the poor guy open. Out poured the golden booty, tons of little green army guys and condoms (some of the little green army guys are still decorating my soup shop today). I pulled off my blindfold and finished my beer. I was ready for womanhood.

We've shared fifteen years of ruckus, beer, and punk rock.

Dinghole Report Flashback #1: First Ever California Ruckus! (Ruckus Rerun #1)

I think it was the spring of 2004 when I first brought my ruckus to sunny California. I was picked up at the Burbank airport and instantly got whisked down to Escondido. We went straight to Davey Tiltwheel's house just as the Tiltwheel guys were waking up. Beers were cracked as we loaded up the band van with my loaner chickenkit (which may or may not have been used on an early Bad Religion album, as Davey told us). The van was absolutely crammed with Tiltwheel's gear, my loaner chickenkit, the Tiltwheel guys, myself, and a bunch of Razorcake members of the Rhythm Chicken Roadie Militia. We were ready.

It was really quite comical when the van started rolling and suddenly someone asked, "Uh, so where will the Chicken play?" I suggested we just drive around looking until the first California location for ruckus to present itself to us. It didn't take long. We pulled into a town park and drove around the picnic area. Off in a grassy field there appeared to be a family having a celebration of some sort. One of our crew figured out that it was, in fact, a *quinceañera party!* Having never roadied a Chicken gig before, my new Roadie Militia required no training and instinctively set up the loaner chickenkit near the celebration.

I sat on the backless wooden chair which was my makeshift throne. While pulling on my Chickenhead, I made a mental note that this was indeed my first West Coast ruckus. Then I unleashed my Midwest poultry prowess! I pounded and pounded and pounded, thrashing about and flopping my chickenears this way and that! During each break in the action I raised my wings to the sunny California sky as my militia hollered

BILL PINKEL

and cheered! The folks at the quinceañera were a little confused and clapped politely. I'm guessing that fifteen-year-old girl is about twenty-six now. I can only wonder if she remembers when the Rhythm Chicken welcomed her to womanhood?

Now here we are at the fifteen-year mark for this here publication. We've shared fifteen years of ruckus, beer, and punk rock. We've seen Razorcake become a 501(c)(3) non-profit. Then there's Gorsky Press and all the great books they've published. There are many cool Razorcake events going on regularly. Razorcake Records keeps putting out more and more quality recordings. The podcasts full of kickass music just keep getting pumped out. Razorcake shows, listening parties, zine fests, and backyard chili-parties keep energizing this network of friends and soon-to-be friends.

Thanks to this publication, I've enjoyed three amazing visits to Southern California with the best punk rock guides a dorky Wisconsinite could hope for. The Chicken has played many, many crazy gigs around L.A. and San Diego (the two best still being the La Brea Tar Pits and inside a tiny Winchell's donut shop in San Pedro!). I've gotten to skate the Garvanza park and under the Channel Street bridge. I've gotten busted by the Union Pacific Railroad Police for dispensing ruckus from atop a train engine. Most importantly, I've gotten to hobnob with a fine slew of dorky California punker-types who keep their washers and dryers outside. I salute your outdoor laundry habits!

Well, Razorcake... welcome to womanhood. I can only imagine what's stuffed in *your* piñata.

–Rhythm Chicken

I was turning into someone I wouldn't like if I met her at a party.

Reasons Not to Be an Idiot

For the last week and a half I've been freaking out about a pair of snow pants. It was not an example my best self.

This started last year with a text from my friend Martha; she is one of the more outdoorsy people I know. And since I am distinctly indoorsy myself, I appreciate having friends who are outside of my comfort zone—literally. Martha makes skating on a frozen canal in frostbite temperatures look like an enchanting experience. She makes winter camping in a yurt with her whole family seem like a good decision. She makes me actually consider going skiing.

Where I truly benefit from Martha's love of outdoor activities is in the instructions she gives me for outfitting my own children for the winter. Martha, like me, has two small kids. And while I am content to spend winter afternoons with my kids at a well-heated indoor playground, she actually takes hers on all the aforementioned outings. That yurt thing was not an exaggeration. So, last spring, when Martha sent me a text message saying, "You need to buy the secondhand snow pants that Julie Moffat just posted on the Ottawa Parents Buy and Sell Group," I wasted no time in contacting Julie Moffat and arranged to drive across town to pick up said snow pants.

When the first snow of the year fell last week, my three-year-old son Milo was, in a word, stoked. Even I gasped when I saw it sparkling on every surface in our yard. Out came the snow pants. I had kid-sized jackets and mittens and hats ready. I was prepared. I was killing it at this winter parenting business. I stood at the door and watched my husband walk off towards daycare with our two boys. Milo shrieked, "I'm making *footprints*!"

The day unfolded normally. I went to work, I came home, I started dinner, and awaited the arrival of the kids, who were being picked up by their grandparents. At five-thirty they all came crashing through the door. My mother-in-law looked like she had something she was afraid to tell me.

"His snow pants are gone."

"Gone?" I asked. "How are they *gone*?"

His jacket had been on the wrong hook. They'd had to search the cloakroom until they found it. There were some snow pants similar to his on another hook. They'd asked him if those were his. Three year olds have no idea if the snow pants they've worn exactly once are theirs. My son said, "Yes?" They brought home a pair of snow pants that definitely were not his. My mother-in-law took them back to the daycare on her way home; I went to bed angry.

The following day my husband reported seeing snow pants that looked like Milo's but were labeled with another child's name.

"Those ones looked like Milo's but they had Ben's name on them. Maybe Ben's parents took Milo's pants home by mistake."

I wrote a note to the daycare supervisor, explaining the situation. She said she'd keep an eye out for the snow pants. I was not satisfied. That night my in-laws arrived home again with the kids. No snow pants. They'd put Ben's snow pants on Ben's hook, hoping that his parents would see them there and realize they'd taken the wrong snow pants home. But days went by and Milo's snow pants failed to materialize. I asked the supervisor again and explained about the snow pants labeled with Ben's name and my related theory. She said she'd email Ben's parents. Several more days went by. The snow melted; perhaps the heat from my rage was too much for it. No snow pants.

I didn't act well. I grumbled privately and publicly about the lost snow pants. I turned into a tangled mess of emotional frustration. Over snow pants. I had suddenly become one of the parents who used to baffle me when I was a childcare worker without kids of my own. *"They're just mittens*," I used to think, when a parent lost their mind after being informed that their child had misplaced a crucial winter item. "*Just go buy another pair.*" For an anti-capitalist I was pretty blasé about the idea of buying new stuff.

I was not going to buy another pair of these damn snow pants. I'd paid a pile of money for them, even though they were second hand. I included the fact that these were fifty dollar snow pants in all my complaints to anyone who would listen. I was well aware of how ridiculously bougie I sounded. I caught a glimpse of myself in a mirror one day after explaining the snow pant situation to a colleague at work. I had a really un-fun scowl on my face. My shoulders were hunched. I'd aged myself worrying about these missing pants. I told myself to settle down. I reminded myself that I was turning into someone I wouldn't like if I met her at a party.

Finally, I went to a second hand store to look for a replacement pair. I hadn't given up hope that the originals would return, but I knew Milo needed something to wear in the event of another snowfall. I found some in his size for the much more reasonable price of seven dollars. The original pants were black. These new ones were red. "Why did my snow pants turn red?" Milo asked, bewildered. He clearly hadn't been keeping close tabs on the situation.

I was just beginning to calm the hell down, when I arrived one night to collect Milo and we ended up in the cloakroom with two of his teachers. They asked if we'd gotten our snow pants back yet. I said we hadn't. I pointed out the bizarro snow pants, on a hook not far from Milo's.

"They're exactly like Milo's," I said, "But they have Ben's name on them. They're the same size and color and everything."

"It's so weird," one of the teachers said, "Because I showed them to Ben's parents

Kids know when we're wrong.
We might as well teach them that good people admit when they've fucked up.

JACKIE RUSTED

and they said they weren't his. He doesn't even have those kind of snow pants. And his last name is not Moffat."

I looked at the label on the snow pants. "*Ben Moffat,*" it read. Suddenly the memory of buying the snow pants from Julie Moffat came back to me. Julie Moffat. Who had a son named Ben. Who'd outgrown the snow pants she'd sold to me. The snow pants that were labeled with her son's name. Because she, clearly, was a responsible parent. I felt like I was falling from a great height into a swimming pool full of embarrassment. I was too ashamed and stunned to say anything right away. I bundled the snow pants into Milo's backpack and left the daycare. Fast.

On the way home I thought about what to do. I could just ignore the fact that I'd been a complete idiot, hang the snow pants up in our closet, and never speak of it again. This approach was very tempting. And it is certainly the route I would have taken in days past. But part of being a parent, for me, is trying to be a better person than I currently am. And trying to model responsible behavior for my kids. There's a weird misconception about it being somehow inappropriate for parents to admit when they're wrong. Like it represents an irreparable crack in the crucial armor of parenthood. It's outdated. Kids know when we're wrong. We might as well teach them that good people admit when they've fucked up.

When I weighed the forecast of how I would feel if I told the truth and apologized versus how I would feel if I *didn't* cop to my own idiocy and hoped the situation just went away, I wasn't surprised to figure out that truth and apologies clearly won. What really swung it was asking myself, "Is anyone going to like me less when I admit that I made a mistake and overreacted?" The answer was no.

Immediately upon arrival at home I hung the snow pants in the closet, put dinner in the oven, and started writing an apology email to the daycare supervisor and the staff. I CC'd my husband and my mother-in-law. I told them I was an idiot. I explained the situation. I apologized for bothering them. And it turned out I was right. No one seemed to suddenly hate me for my crummy behavior. It was a pretty good revelation.

I went to bed that night feeling just fine about myself. And when I woke up the next morning, it was snowing.

–Jennifer Whiteford

Brandon Carlisle (1978-2015)

Teenage Bottlerocket

1-2-3-4! That was tough! After a bunch of attempts to figure out how to start something like this—a tribute to a drummer, a friend, a music lover, a rock'n'roll blood brother, and one of the most positive and enthusiastic band dudes I've ever met—it became obvious: I was over-thinking it. Just start the tribute like he counted off Teenage Bottlerocket songs….

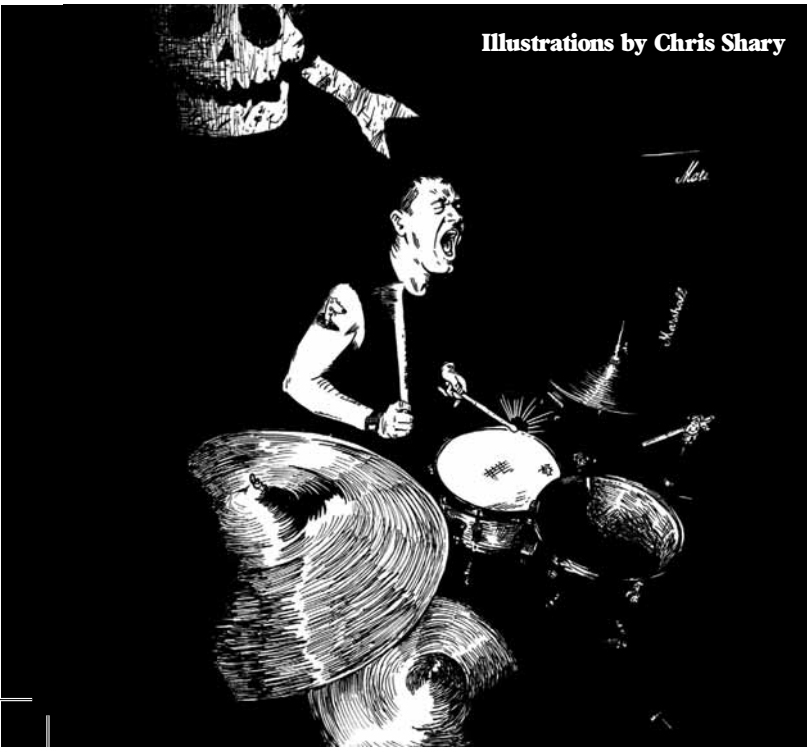
1-2-3-4!

Everyone suffers loss, and I won't pretend that I have it harder than everyone else, but our little group of thirty to forty-something San Francisco Bay Area punks has been hit especially hard by death this year. David Jones of Enemy You, Heiko Schrepel of One Man Army, and now Brandon Carlisle of Teenage Bottlerocket. Though Brandon lived in Fort Collins, Colo. and originally hailed from Laramie, Wyo., he had a ton of friends in the Bay Area, including myself and everyone else at Fat Wreck Chords, the San Francisco label Bottlerocket called home for six years.

Brandon, Ray, Kody, and Miguel are all family to us, and it feels like we've lost another brother. Another genuinely good, good person. A fellow drummer who nailed the eighth notes on the hi-hat and gave every single performance his complete *all*. A dude who got the same Ramones tattoo I did. A guy who also grew his hair long and loved metal, just like myself. It's as if he was my long-lost cousin.

This is not how it was supposed to happen. Brandon loved life. He loved his band, he loved playing drums, he loved music, he loved discovering new bands, he loved telling everyone how much he dug new records. The day before he was hospitalized and in a coma, right after Fest, he texted me: "Missed you this weekend. Wanted to tell you… *Mutiny at Muscle Beach* flippin' shreds. Hope to hang soon. Rock." That's exactly who he was. His band just finished a tour and instead of going into hibernation like I think I'd do, he made a point to reach out to me and tell me that he loved the newest Night Birds record, a band we both love whose newest album, incidentally, *does* flippin' shred! That's a sliver of the kind of person Brandon was.

I honestly can't remember the first time I met Brandon. Bottlerocket had played in San Francisco before, and I'm sure I was there, but memories from show nights (read: party nights) tend to be pretty fuzzy. What I do remember very distinctly is hanging out with him at Punk Rock Bowling in Las Vegas in January 2008. Brandon and his twin brother Ray, one of Bottlerocket's two singers/guitarists, approached me at the Atrium bar in Sam's Town. They had heard I had a big Ramones eagle chest piece and wanted to see it. I showed them and Brandon enthusiastically told me it was "freakin' awesome." Maybe those weren't his exact words at the time, but that's how he talked and that's probably what he said.



Illustrations by Chris Shary

Bottlerocket's second Red Scare album was just about to come out and Brandon was especially proud of it. He confided in me that he didn't think they were going to be able to top their previous, breakthrough album *Total*—now a pop-punk classic—but that they did. He gave me a CD, and wanted to know what I thought. Genuinely wanted to know what I thought. Everyone in bands handles these things differently. Some people won't even talk about their bands, some people are self-deprecating, and some people are so proud of what they've done that they can't wait to show you. This was Brandon. After a decade of playing and recording in punk bands, he was finally in a position where a sizeable portion of the punk rock public was waiting in anticipation to hear his new album and he was stoked!

That enthusiasm was on full display every single time I ever hung out with Brandon, whether it was at a Bottlerocket show; an after-party at the Dead To Me house; getting burritos at the Fat office; playing an insanely hot daytime outdoor show at South by Southwest in Austin (who thought that was a good idea?!); or one of my proudest moments, introducing the band to the glory that is Manitoba's bar (and punk rock museum) in the East Village of New York City, and blasting The Dictators for them. That was in 2010, and every hang since then has been a bonding experience—shooting the shit about awesome bands, killer new records, and amazing shows we'd seen.

As I mentioned, Brandon ended up getting his own Ramones eagle chest piece, and it so happened to be the exact same as mine. I won't lie, I gave him shit for "stealing" my tattoo for a while, probably too long. But after a time, after certain wise friends pointed out the obvious fact that I wasn't the first person to ever get a Ramones tattoo, and after Brandon and I became friends, I felt more honored than anything.

In Austin, Texas in 2013, after Bottlerocket's set in one hundred-plus degree heat and in direct sun—with Brandon, tough as nails, playing no slower and hitting no softer than he always did (very hard and very fast!)—we continued the party at a night show. A bunch of bands played, including Bottlerocket. But in retrospect, the best part of the night was that we finally took a side-by-side photo, buds with matching Ramones tributes. And honestly, I secretly wished I'd thought of getting his "Too Tough to Die" in the banner instead of my "Hey Ho Let's Go." It's just cooler. And that's the phrase that stuck in my head during the days Brandon was in a coma. So even though Brandon's body may be dead, I will never, ever think of him as gone. Brandon will never die in our hearts, in our memories, or on our turntables. And the positivity and enthusiasm Brandon had for life, that infectious spirit he spread to everyone he met, is something that truly is too tough to die.

Ray, Kody, Miguel, I love you guys. Brandon, rest in peace my friend. And.... Rock!

–Chad Williams (Western Addiction/Fat Wreck Chords)

Fest 2015
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Marc Gärtner

9/16/2015
Richmond, Va.
Julie A. Ferguson

Austin, TX 2013
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7/01/2015
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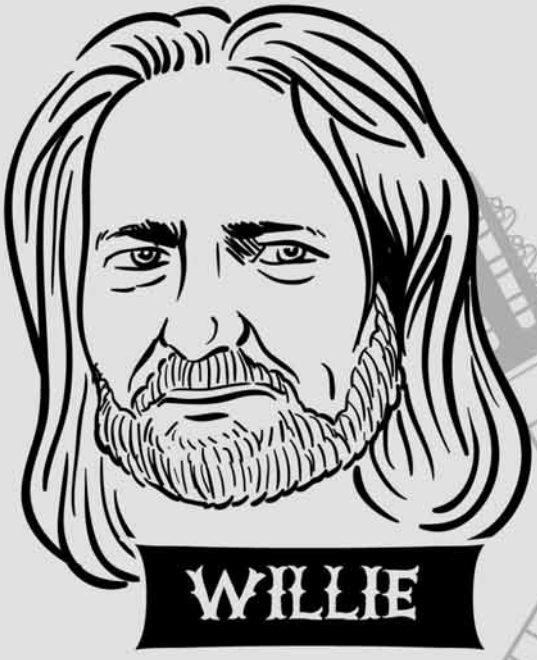
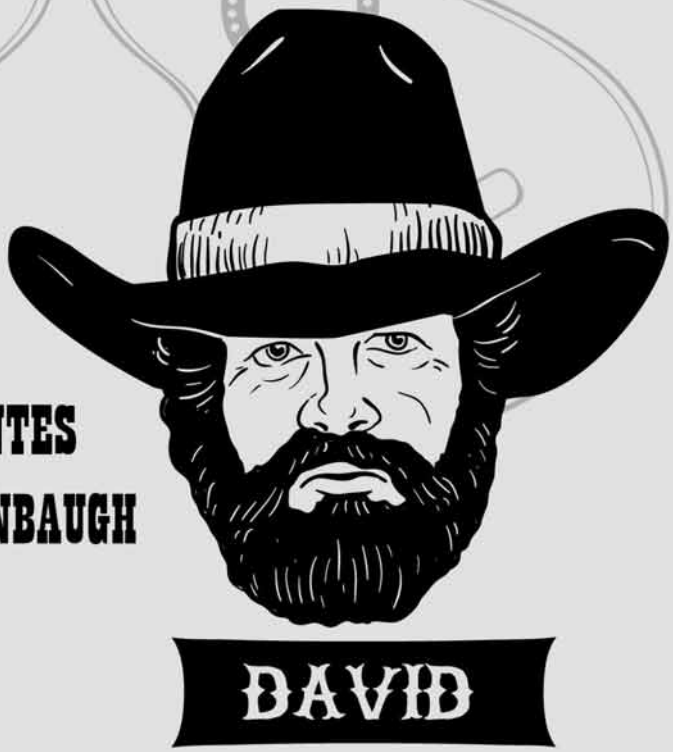


ONE PUNK'S GUIDE TO OUTLAW COUNTRY



By MP Johnson
Illustrations by Art Fuentes
Layout by Madeline Bridenbaugh

Early 2000s: Terry's Pine Grove Pub on the aptly named Stagecoach Road. A rundown roadhouse amidst farms and fields somewhere in Northeastern Wisconsin. The middle of nowhere, really.

My girlfriend and I pulled up in a car. We had to park on the side of the road because the lot was full of motorcycles. The big ones. The mean ones. Harleys. Indians. All black paint. Lots of chrome. We were immediately out of place.

We made our way into the field out behind the dive bar, a field filled with bikers in patched leathers and denims. There's a thing now where lawyers and CEOs get big bikes and ride them around on the weekends. This wasn't that thing. These dudes were roadworn. Faded tattoos. Dirty hands. I didn't know shit about motorcycle clubs, so the patches meant nothing to me. Lots of skulls. The word "Outlaws" in big, bold letters.

We wore punk rock T-shirts and smiles.

Before the sun set, a band climbed onto a makeshift stage propped up against the back of Terry's. An old man stepped up to the microphone in a black sleeveless shirt, bared arms covered in tattoos, long hair streaming down his back, gray in places, dyed here and there. Colored bands adorned his braided beard, which ran down past his chest. I couldn't tell whether he'd come from the South or from a spaceship. He scowled and introduced himself as David Allan Coe.

The bikers raised their beers. Over the next hour or so, this rugged motherfucker schooled everyone on the gritty, rock-fueled brand of country music he helped pioneer three decades earlier: outlaw country.

In "Longhaired Redneck," he sang about playing at dives "where bikers stare at cowboys who are laughin' at the hippies, who are prayin' they'll get out of here alive." I looked around at the grizzled bikers who made up most of the crowd and the words didn't ring true. None of them were staring at me. Smiling maybe, but not staring. I didn't see a single fight. Nobody was fearing for their lives.

And when it came time for the final song and everybody—my girlfriend and me included—sung along to every word of "You Never Even Called Me By My Name." It didn't matter where we came from or what we rode in on—our shouts were forever mingled in that sweaty, Northeastern Wisconsin night.

Fuck Johnny Cash

Johnny Cash has dropped some badass records, but Johnny Cash is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to country music and it's time to recognize that he is not the be-all and end-all of the genre. I'm sick of hearing people tell me, "I hate all country music, except Johnny Cash." Fuck that.

But I understand. For many years, Cash's *The Sun Years* and *American Recordings* were the only representation of country in my music collection. And I had only bought the latter for the Danzig song. That was all I needed to know about the genre, or so I thought. Then I picked up Willie Nelson's *Red Headed Stranger*.

I was at a record store in Neenah, Wisconsin, that was going out of business. There was some sort of three-fer deal. I grabbed Judas Priest's *Screaming for Vengeance* and another metal record, but was having a hell of a time completing my three-fer. *Red Headed Stranger* was sitting at the front of the country section and it caught my eye. It looked rustic. It looked rough. I worked at a factory and didn't have much money coming in, so I had to pick the third record carefully. I didn't know any of the songs. Fuck it. I bought it.

It wasn't the first record I played out of that batch, but it ended up being the one I played the most. Yes, even more than *Screaming for Vengeance*. It wasn't what I expected. Not at all. It was so sparse. It sounded like it had a coat of dust on it. Willie and his beat-up acoustic guitar were the breeze that blew that dust from song to song, telling the story of a preacher who loses his lady, loses his faith, and rides off on the trail of vengeance. On first listen, I got chills at the end of "Time of the Preacher," the opening song: "Now the preachin' is over, and the lesson's begun."

I was in awe of the storytelling, the depth of emotion, the purity of song and sound that Johnny Cash would get so much acclaim for decades later when Rick Rubin cajoled him into stripping off all the superficial bullshit for the *American Recordings* series. I lost my shit. I took a deep dive into Willie's discography and discovered the outlaw country movement this record came from.

The outlaw country movement was about unfettered creativity, pure and simple.

What Is Outlaw Country?

The outlaw country movement was about unfettered creativity, pure and simple. Much like punk, it was about standing up to the forces that favored the manufacture of sterile hits in favor of honesty and exploration in lyrics and sound.

The truth is, Johnny Cash was not part of the outlaw country movement. He hung out at the edges of the scene and helped his peers here and there, but he had already earned his creative freedom from the record labels. The documentary *Heartworn Highways* chronicled the country songwriters struggling for creative freedom in the '70s. In it, one of the songwriters calls it: by the time the outlaw movement started, Johnny Cash had "done blew his load."

By the late '60s, Nashville dominated the country music scene thanks to record labels like RCA. Somewhere along the way though, the music had taken a wrong turn. The days of the raw shit purveyed by Hank Williams, Ernest Tubb, and other forebears were long gone. In their place were clean-cut dudes in fancy suits producing a pop-country hybrid referred to as "countrypolitan."

Everything was so clean. On songs like Lynn Anderson's "(I Never Promised You a) Rose Garden" and Charley Pride's "Kiss an Angel Good Morning," producers added layers of backing vocals and lush string sections. And not economically. No, they plastered those strings everywhere. They cleaned up the rough edges. They sucked out all the honky tonk. Country music had become so safe it was a joke.

The labels had created a factory-like system, and label heads like Chet Atkins at RCA refused to deviate from their formulas. The label picked the producer, the studio, and the studio musicians. The label or producer even picked the songs, not on the basis of making a cohesive album, but in a let's-throw-it-against-the-wall-and-see-what-sticks approach to making hits. So the records were scattered. Some contained good songs, but no cohesiveness, no personality.

Enter a handful of pill-popping cowboys who had some wild ideas and a relentless determination to see those ideas come to fruition. These guys hung out in the West End, Nashville's answer to Greenwich Village. They wandered around Austin and other parts of Texas. They read and wrote poetry. They valued the song and the songwriter as much as they did the singer.

They were loud and rambunctious and they grew their hair long and didn't have the sort of puritanical need to keep rock and country separate that the country stars of the day had. They stayed up all night in studios, partying and writing songs. They fought back against the record labels to record those songs and to

record them the right way. With their touring bands, with producers and studios of their choosing. With songs that they wrote or that they believed in.

And without any fucking strings.

Meet the Outlaws

Chet Atkins and RCA had groomed Waylon Jennings as a nice folk-country singer, putting out albums with titles like *Love of the Common People*. Folk music was big at the time, so it seemed like a lucrative market. Well, that's just not who Waylon was. This was a dude who had played in Buddy Holly's band and who held the burden of The Day The Music Died in his heart, having joked to Holly on that fateful night, "I hope your ol' plane crashes." He was a road dog, with a touring band that pulled in crowds night after night, but he couldn't get them in the studio. He couldn't get his own sounds in the studio until he finally put the pressure on RCA, got himself a shrewd manager, and set out to make a record he wanted to make.

1973's *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* was the first record where Waylon was given a measure of freedom. The title track crashes out of the gate, trampling his label-prescribed folk-country image with a stomping bass line turned up high in the mix. That galloping, bass-driven sound would become his signature, a rowdy sound that meshed beautifully with his deep, booming voice. On the surface, it was the perfect sound for drinking and brawling. It came packaged with lyrics that contrasted against the saccharine lines of the countrypolitan hits so severely they revealed them for the one-dimensional crap they were.

Perhaps the most blatant indication of how much the outlaw movement valued songwriters was the success of Kris Kristofferson. The lyrical shift that took place with the outlaw movement is often described as a shift toward "more mature themes." That's bullshit. The themes were the same: love and loss and life. The distinction is that songwriters like Kristofferson explored these themes with greater depth and detail, greater candor. They wrote lyrics based on the lives they'd lived. They strived for authenticity and poetry and didn't worry about hit-making. Kristofferson, a disciple of the English poet William Blake, was a well-to-do kid from Brownsville, Texas. A star college athlete who flew a helicopter in Vietnam, he earned his parents' ire by uprooting his life and family and moving to Nashville with little more than a love of writing songs. In the song "The Pilgrim-Chapter 33" he wrote:

"He has tasted good and evil in your bedrooms and your bars,
and he's traded in tomorrow for today.
Runnin' from his devils, Lord,
and reachin' for the stars,
and losin' all he's loved along the way."

That kind of honest songwriting just wasn't coming out of Nashville at the time, and people noticed. Specifically, Johnny Cash noticed. Cash supported Kristofferson and was one of the first to bring the songwriter onstage to sing his own songs, a strange move. Kristofferson had come to Nashville to write songs and had no intention of being a singer. Still, he ended up performing and signed a recording contract, despite the fact that at best, his singing might be described as handsome, and at worst, it might be described as sounding like a bum with a bunch of socks stuffed in his mouth. It didn't matter, because everyone was taken aback by those lyrics, from his peers in Nashville (Cash and Waylon and Willie and many more recorded Kristofferson's songs) to rockers and hippies and just regular people.

It says a lot that on Kristofferson's album *The Silver Tongued Devil and I* there is only one song written by someone other than him: "Good Christian Soldier" by Billy Joe Shaver. Billy Joe Shaver came from a different world than Kristofferson. He grew up poor in Corsicana, TX. He lost a good chunk of the fingers on his right hand in a mill accident as a young man, but he taught himself how to play guitar anyway and set himself to writing songs. In "Georgia on a Fast Train," he writes:

"And I just thought I'd mention,
my Grandma's old age pension,
is the reason why I'm standing here today.
I got all my country learning,
milking and a churning,
pickin' cotton, raisin' hell,
and bailin' hay."

Kristofferson took notice of Billy Joe Shaver and even produced his debut album *Old Fiver and Dimers like Me*. After Waylon gained the right to choose the songs he recorded, he put together an entire album of Billy Joe Shaver songs: *Honky Tonk Heroes*. That album and Willie's *Red Headed Stranger* are perhaps the purest examples of what the outlaw country scene was all about.

Enter a handful of pill-popping cowboys who had some wild ideas and a relentless determination.

Something odd happened with *Red Headed Stranger*: the label thought the record was a joke at first. One label head was furious because he thought Willie had recorded it in a kitchen somewhere just to get out of his contract. *Red Headed Stranger* ended up selling millions. With this record, country busted out of being a niche market and sold to rockers and hippies. Hell, even young punks like Jello Biafra, who would later cover Willie's "Still Is Still Moving to Me," picked this shit up. Outlaw country became a regular phenomenon.

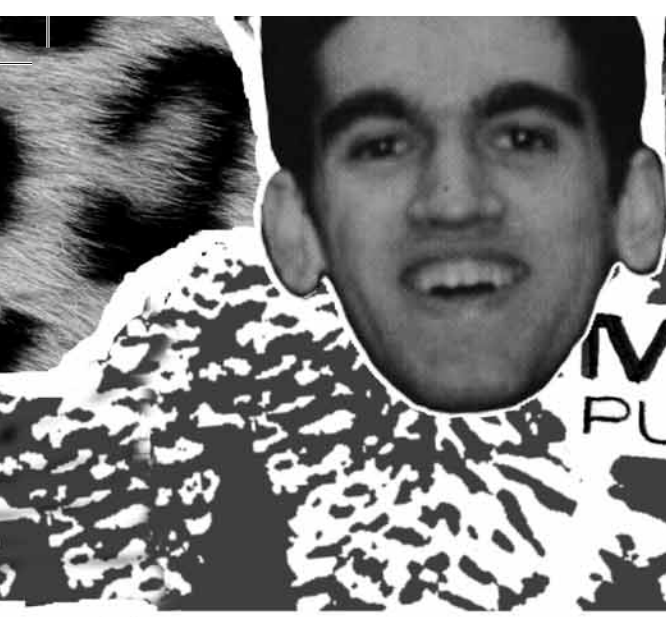
David Allan Coe had come to Nashville in a hearse, which he parked outside the Grand Ol' Opry, Nashville's traditional country music institution. He played his music there and anywhere else he could. With his time spent behind bars and tall tales of murder and misdeeds, he was a shoo-in for the outlaw country movement.

Like the other the outlaws, it took him a few albums to warm up. His debut *Penitentiary Blues* was a bluesy take on life in prison—it sounded nothing like the sound he would become known for. He really didn't lock into his signature sound until his fourth album *Once upon a Rhyme*. That album opens with "Would You Lay with Me (In a Field of Stone)"—the ballad that would seal his reputation as a songwriter, a song that would be covered by everyone from Tanya Tucker, who made it a hit, to The Divine Horsemen (an offshoot of The Flesh Eaters). But it was the title track of the following album, *Longhaired Redneck* (notoriously covered by GG Allin), that really cemented his image as a true outlaw that bikers and barroom brawlers could look up to.

Emmylou Harris may not be the first person name-dropped in discussions of the movement, but records like *Pieces of Sky* displayed everything that the scene was about: originality, energy, honesty. The opening track "Bluebird Wine" brings in rock influences and a chorus of "And it's all right now, I've just hit my stride" that just doesn't leave your head.

Jessi Colter unleashed a run of records in the '70s that have never gotten their due. She doesn't even get her due in her own releases.

JESSI
TOWNES
KRIS
BILLY JOE



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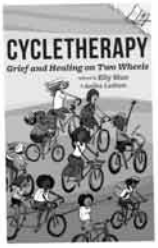

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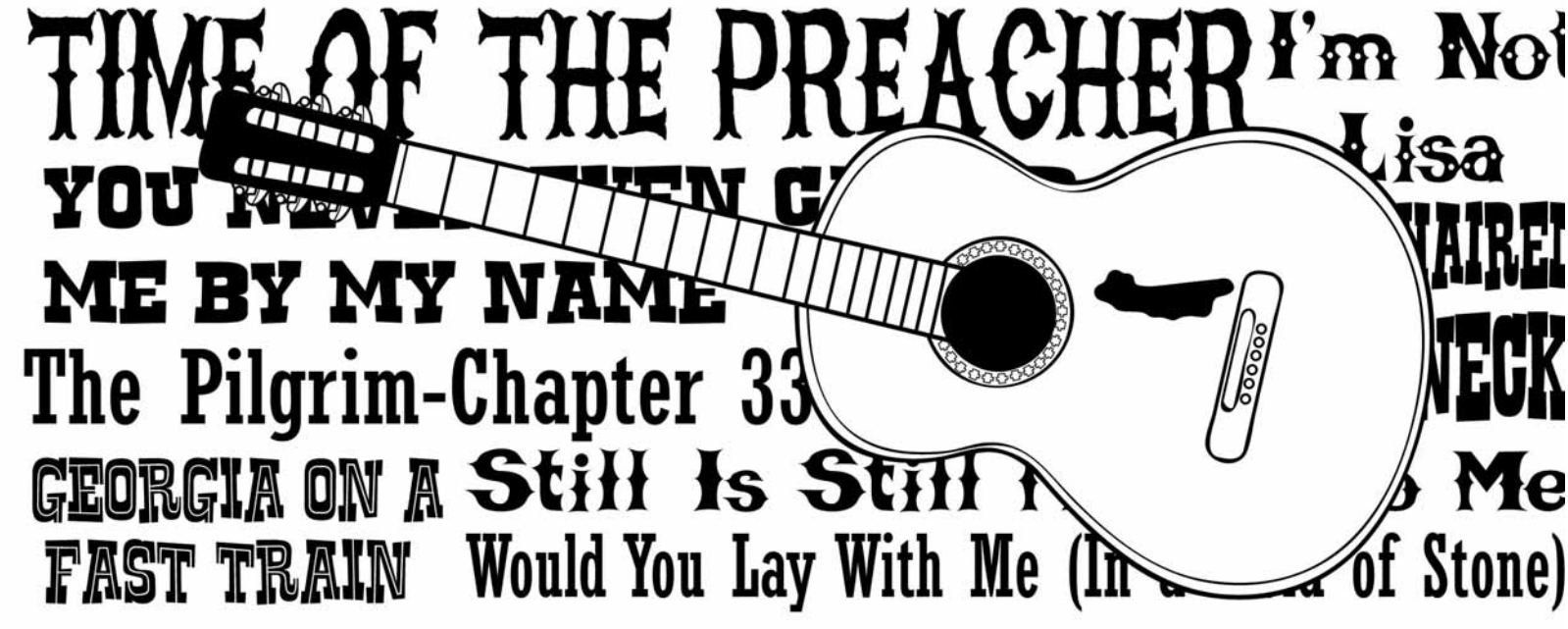

I've got a CD that collects three of her best records, starting with *I'm Jessi Colter*, and the liner notes begin by saying the number one reason "this lady deserves your time: She was married to two very famous musicians in Duane Eddy and Waylon Jennings." That's why you need to know about Jessi? Not because her voice could move so effortlessly from soft and fragile to a growl that would make any of her brethren in the scene jealous? Not because she wrote songs that far inferior country dudes managed to run up the charts? Not because she was a classically trained pianist who could crush it on the keys?

The few Colter songs that made it out as singles were ballads like the weepy "I'm Not Lisa." Sure, they were beautiful songs, but when you listen to them in the context of albums that included stompers and rockers like "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," they seem a little tepid. The latter tune dared to tread further into rock territory than a lot of her outlaw peers had tread before.

The story of outlaw country is often painted as being the story of Waylon, Willie, and Kristofferson. Yeah, those guys were the most visible, but they were also the guys who eventually drifted the furthest from the movement's initial goal of authenticity and creativity. Townes Van Zandt didn't get the hits the other guys did, but looking back, his records stayed a lot more true to the outlaw country ethos.

Then there's a veritable army of Tompall Glasers and Steve Youngs who were at the heart of the chaos, even if they didn't get the spotlight. There were guys at the edge of the scene like Shel Silverstein, who I first encountered not as the writer of "A Boy Named Sue" and other comedic country tunes, but when I, like a lot of kids in my generation, read his book of poems *Where the Sidewalk Ends* over and over in grade school.

But Were They Actually Outlaws?

Hazel Smith, a well-known publicist and journalist working in Nashville in the '70s, coined the phrase "Outlaw Country." The media had been looking for a buzzword for the music that was coming out. She picked up a dictionary and found the word "outlaw." Seemed like a good fit to her. But these guys weren't criminals. They were musicians.

Well, primarily.

There were a lot of drugs in the scene. It was mostly speed in the late '60s and early '70s. Pills. Then around the mid-'70s, cocaine came to Nashville and became the drug of choice. Everyone was doing it. Waylon spent thousands of dollars on the stuff and soon found himself the target of a DEA investigation. He was arrested and faced drug conspiracy charges. The charges against him were eventually dismissed, but some of his people were convicted. Willie's drug of choice was marijuana, and he was busted a few times for possession. That was about as far outside of the law that he and most of the outlaws got.

But the scene could be violent. Tours took groups to what they referred to as "the skull orchard," dingy middle-of-nowhere dives with rough and tumble crowds. In the book *Outlaw: Waylon, Willie, Kris, and the Renegades of Nashville*, Billy Ray Reynolds, Waylon's guitar player at the time, recounts a tale of violence at one of these shows. A woman was messing with her ex, dancing with every man in the joint just to fuck with him. Between Waylon's sets, the guy went nuts. "This guy just walked up and shot the guy she was dancing with right in front of us." In a separate incident, a shootout in Atlanta left Paul Gray, another member of Waylon's band, dead. Violence like this added to the mystique of Waylon and the other outlaws, and record sales grew along with it.

These guys weren't criminals. They were musicians.... Well, primarily.

But some of the stories were just stories. For a good part of his career, David Allan Coe spread a tale about the violence that got him put behind bars and the violence he committed there; he claimed he killed a fellow prisoner who tried to rape him. The media ate that shit up and many reported his stories as verifiable facts. Later it came out that his claims of killing were unsubstantiated and that he had been locked up for possession of burglary tools.

The Death and Rebirth of Outlaw Country

Full disclosure: I never actually listened to Kristofferson until recently. I couldn't take him seriously. My first encounter with him

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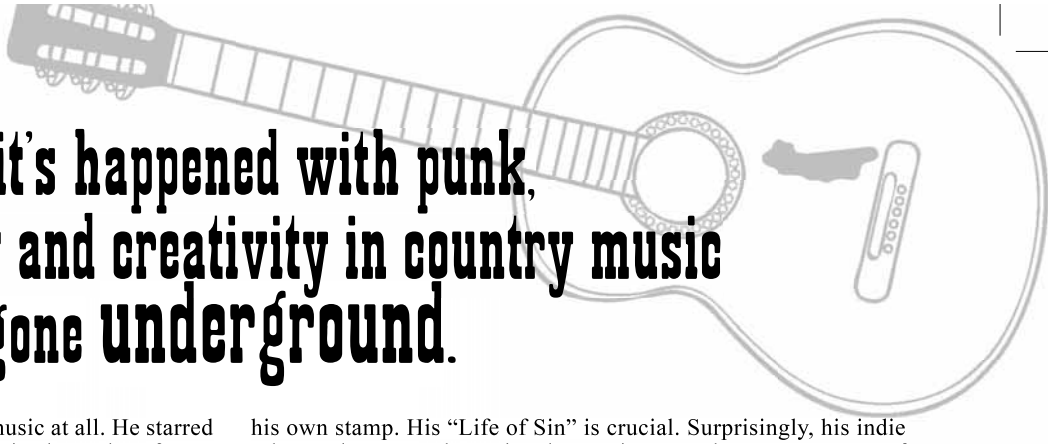


In the same way it's happened with punk, authenticity and creativity in country music have gone underground.

was well before I gave a shit about country music at all. He starred in a movie called *Knights*, which came out in the wake of Jean Claude Van Damme's *Cyborg*, amidst the cyborg B-movie frenzy of the early '90s. In it, Kristofferson plays Gabriel, a grizzled old warrior cyborg who trains a young kickboxer to destroy the evil cyborgs. He spouts goofy cyber-philosophy. It's about as far removed from the poetry of his early albums as you can get and was one of many wrong turns taken by the outlaws beginning in the late '70s.

Despite doing everything possible to thwart the record label hit-making tactics, the outlaws made hits. Not only did they make hits, they made some of the biggest-selling country albums of all time. Hippies dug Kristofferson. Rockers got into Waylon. Everybody loved Willie. Those records cruised up not only the country charts, but also the more far-reaching pop charts.

And, as these stories usually go, success fucks everything up. While the outlaws maintained their creative control, they also bowed to the pressure of living up to their sales figures. 1978's *Ol' Waylon* opens with "Luchenbach, Texas," a song that Jennings hated but decided to record because he knew a hit when he heard one. Well, it was a hit. It was also slick and overproduced, and his records just got cleaner in the years that followed. That driving bass that served him so well starting with *Lonesome, On'ry and Mean* was pushed deeper and deeper into the mix. Personally, I enjoy hearing Waylon's booming baritone singing just about anything, but as much as I love his cover of Fleetwood Mac's "Rhiannon," there's just something not particularly outlaw about it.

The same year *Ol' Waylon* came out, Willie released *Stardust*. That album became an instant hit but it's not a country record by any stretch of the imagination. It's a record of pop standards like the title track. There's no doubt that it's a great album, and a perfect fit for Willie's habit of jumping around the beat vocally, but where's the outlaw shit?

And I'm not even going to get started on "Divers do it Deeper," David Allen Coe's Jimmy Buffet impersonation.

Now, if you turn on just about any country music station, you're going to be lamenting the demise of outlaw country. There are certainly no remnants of it on commercial radio, where pop country and bro country reign supreme.

In the same way it's happened with punk, rock, hip-hop and other genres, authenticity and creativity in country music have gone underground. If you go by the definition of outlaw country as being about creativity and originality, there's still plenty of stuff out there. If you are looking for something that actually sounds like the outlaw shit that Waylon, Willie, and the gang were putting out in the '70s, that's a bit tougher to find. Few are embracing the mix of rock and country that so many of the outlaws favored. Right now, Hank Williams Sr. pastiche is in vogue.

Say what you will about Hank III's attempts at metal and punk, he's released some great outlaw country stuff. He sounds eerily like his great granddad vocally, but musically he's straight out of '70s outlaw territory. Shooter Jennings, son of Jessi Colter and Waylon, has recorded some tedious industrial stuff, but also a handful of great records that draw influence from his parents.

Some other younger country singers and bands embracing the outlaw sound include Whitey Morgan, Nikki Lane, Lydia Loveless, and Hellbound Glory. I just caught Sturgill Simpson live a couple nights ago opening for Merle Haggard and Kristofferson at the county fair. This guy has come out of nowhere with heartfelt country music that draws inspiration from the outlaw movement, but with his own stamp. His "Life of Sin" is crucial. Surprisingly, his indie releases have caught national attention. Maybe a resurgence of outlaw country is on the way?

Billy Joe Shaver

Early 2010s: Granada Theater. Dallas, Texas. Cowboys mingling with people in fancy clothes. Nice joint. A man with a fistful of missing fingers takes the stage and beats on an old guitar while the crowd watches in awe. He tells stories of love and loss that are so honest you have to fight to keep your knees from buckling.

For my money, Billy Joe Shaver is outlaw country.

He was there at the beginning, dusting it up with Waylon, Willie, and Kristofferson. They recorded his songs. Despite not having the strongest voice, he put out an album or two of his own. In the '80s, when the other outlaws were selling out, he stayed true to what he had set out to do. His records didn't get much attention but he kept making them—and somehow his voice grew stronger, richer, and weightier with age.

In the early '90s, he teamed up with his son, guitar player Eddy Shaver. Eddy, who had been tutored by Dicky Betts from the Allman Brothers, brought a little more rock'n'roll to the mix. They made a series of records that culminated in *The Earth Rolls On*, my vote for best country record of the '90s.

This was a record made in the wake of the death of Billy Joe's wife Brenda. The two had a tumultuous relationship. They had divorced twice. Before her death,, they remarried for the third time. His lyrics reflect the joys of love and the pain of loss, but without any saccharine bullshit. In "Blood Is Thicker than Water," Eddy sings a verse: "I seen you puking up your guts and running with sluts when you was married to my mother." It's a hard album to listen to in a lot of ways because of that honesty, but the joy of a father and a son working together to create something so pure after many rocky years is a stark contrast to the sadness.

Unfortunately, Eddy Shaver died of a heroin overdose right around the time of the album's release.

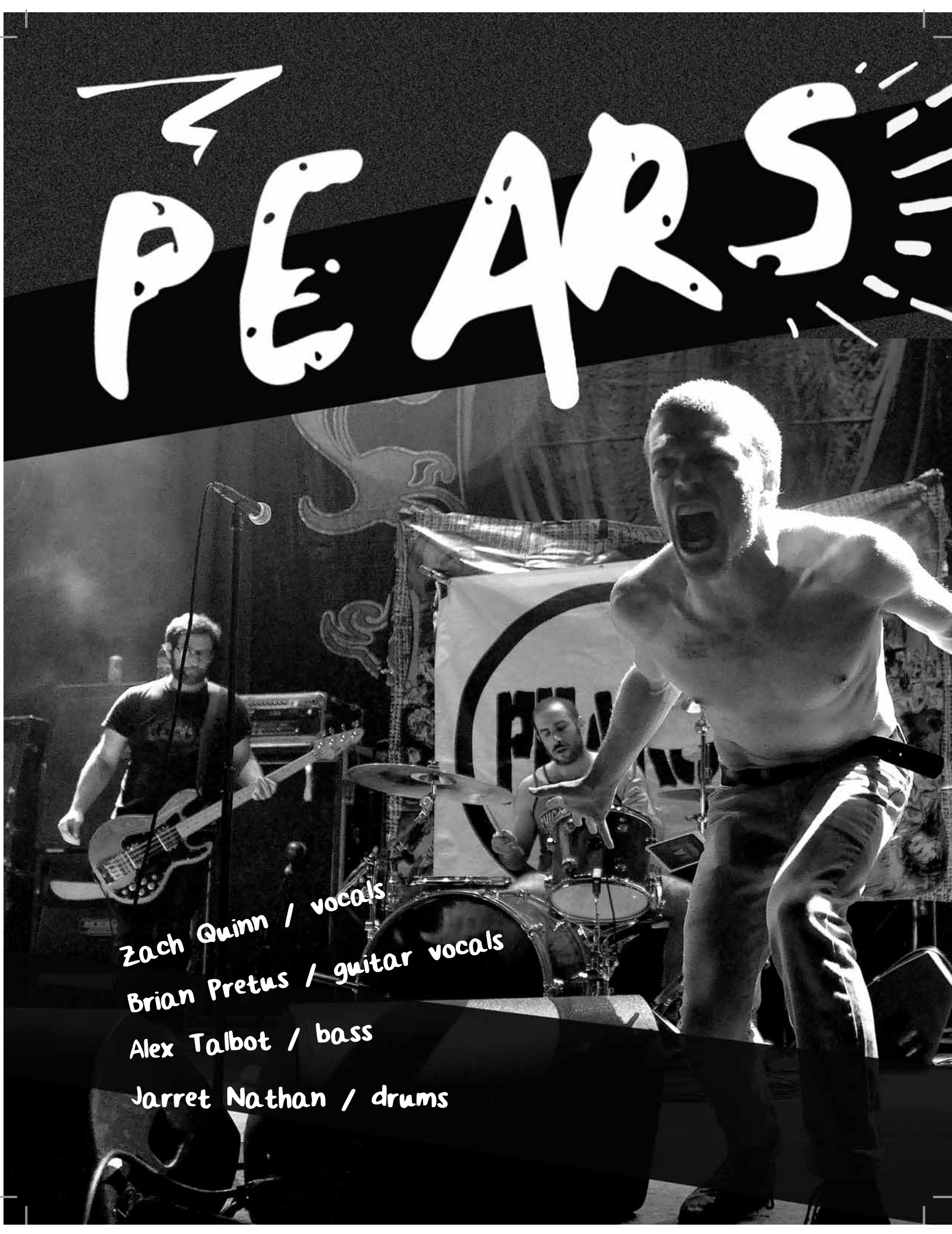
Over the years, Billy Joe Shaver has maybe stayed a little too true to his outlaw spirit. In the late 2000s, he shot a man in the face outside a tavern in Lorenzo, Texas. According to reports, the victim's injuries were not life threatening. Through some impressive lawyering and claims of self-defense, he was acquitted. When asked by National Public Radio about the incident, he said, "I hit him right between a 'mother' and a 'fucker.' That was the end of that."

Billy Joe continues to record albums that remind me why I got into outlaw country in the first place. On *The Real Deal*, one of his more recent albums, there's a song called "Down the Road By the Way" that has one of my favorite choruses ever:

"Well it's down the road up the hill
And just around the bend
Pick 'em up and put 'em down
And pick 'em up again
And it sets me in to wondering
What it's really all about
Fighting for the things we know
We'll always be without."

I have yet to hear life summed up any better.

PEARS



Zach Quinn / vocals

Brian Pretus / guitar vocals

Alex Talbot / bass

Jarret Nathan / drums

Interview and Photos / Paul Silver

Layout / Dylan Davis

Alex, Jarret, Zach and Brian (L to R)

Pears. A year and a half ago, all that word meant to most people was a type of fruit. Today, it's a band operating at full throttle, both musically and in their work ethic. While the band is from New Orleans, they may as well be homeless because they spend nearly all of their time on the road, touring incessantly. Though they spend little time at home these days, The Big Easy has a strong influence on their music—from the debauchery of the French Quarter, to the high crime rates, to surviving hurricane Katrina, the city has left its mark. They play blisteringly fast, yet melodic, hardcore punk punctuated with gut-wrenching grindcore breakdowns.

Their name has its origin in a bad mushroom trip taken by lead vocalist Zach Quinn. In it, bananas came to represent all that was good and pure, while pears symbolized all that was bad. "Pears" then became slang among Zach and his friends for bullshit. Zach suggested it for the band name. No one liked it.

The band may have risen rapidly from obscurity to top-of-mind, but they aren't resting on their laurels. After signing to Fat Wreck Chords, they have continued to work harder and faster. They've set themselves on a trajectory with no apex in sight.

When we have nothing important to do, we can party anybody into the dirt.

Paul: Are you secretly Spinal Tap? You're on your third drummer in a year and a half. [laughter] Did the others explode on stage?
Brian: Yeah, pretty much.
Zach: I think that's just one of those things. Most bands go through different band members. But when you hit the ground running as hard as we did and tour as much as we did, everything has just happened….
Alex: Really fast, yeah.
Zach: So the turnover that was going to happen….
Jarret: Not again, though. I think we're good. [laughs]
Brian: That's what he thinks!
Paul: Three of you—Zach, Brian, and Alex—were previously in a band called The Lollies. What made you decide to change drummers and change names?
Zach: Well, we split up for six months.
Brian: We broke up because our drummer couldn't play anymore. And he was our second drummer in The Lollies!
Zach: Yeah, he had medical problems with his wrists. We had all gotten burned out on the project because nothing really happened. Nobody took it really seriously.
Alex: We didn't do it right.
Zach: Then we did this. We were much better about it. We did a better job.
Alex: I wasn't in college anymore, so we could have the time to do it.
Paul: So what did you do differently?
Zach: Everything.
Brian: [Pointing to Zach] He's sober now.
Zach: I'm sure that had a lot to do with it.
Brian: Anybody who was in New Orleans that was going to be a fan of us was already a fan of The Lollies. So we just took that and forgot all about it and went from there.
Zach: I feel with the internet at play now, the old issue of getting a local following before hitting the road is far less important.
Brian: A lot of bands are starting to do the same thing.
Zach: Right out of the gate, you can be working at a national level.
Brian: Worldwide is the smartest way to think about it from the get-go, or else you're pigeonholing yourself into something too small.
Paul: What are other key differences between The Lollies and Pears?
Brian: I write more in Pears than I did in The Lollies, because I was really immature when I was in The Lollies. Zach and I do everything fifty-fifty now and it's way easier, to be honest. If someone comes to practice with a song already done, you skip the days and days of practices where everyone just sits there noodling, trying to figure songs out.
Zach: Streamlined songwriting process, for sure.
Brian: That, and we had no idea of what press was, at all, in The Lollies. Since the beginning of this band, we've had a gigantic list of all the press outlets we've made rad friends with, like you guys, and For The Love Of Punk people, Dying Scene people, everybody. That's helped a ton, just being able to get the word out on a way bigger scale than just friends at home.
Zach: I got really sick of singing about myself to nobody. [laughs] I want to sing about myself to everybody. [laughter]
Paul: How did you actually come up with "Pears?" I've already heard the mushroom story.
Jarret: I actually came up with it. I wasn't even in the band yet, [laughs] and they called me because they knew I was such a good person and really giving. And they said, "Hey, Jarret! We need something good." And I said, "Hold your horses!" [loud laughter] I was eating fruit at the time and I said, "What's missing from this fruit salad? Pears." [more laughter] And there you have it.
Zach: It really was a mushroom trip. It became slang, between my friends and me, for bullshit. You know, "That shit's pears."
Paul: I really like bands that defy simple categorization and Pears definitely does that. Your music blends the speed and intensity of hardcore punk, the melodic sensibilities of pop punk, and the gut-wrenching power of grindcore. How did this sound develop?
Zach: We wrote the first record so quickly that we had just a jumble of riffs and ideas, and then the real challenge was connecting them. I think that's kind of how it happened. The kind of spur of the moment writing, then try to piece it together afterwards. Also, I think there's an element of being conscious of not pigeonholing yourself. Rather than being like some people who want to start another project that's going to sound like "this," so I can do "this," let's just do it all with the same band, all in the same song. Why not?
Paul: So you have diverse tastes in music? [All nod in agreement.]
Jarret: I think all of us do.
Brian: He listens to the weirdest stuff of all. [Points to Alex.]
Jarret: I think by "weird," he means Bjork.
Brian: Weird, like elevator bleep bloop music. [laughs]
Alex: Bleep bloop music, yeah.
Brian: But that's great, though. At the core of all of us, we all like punk rock the most. That's why it works.
Paul: Zach and Brian, you do most of the writing together. What's the process like?
Brian: It's usually that Zach and I will get together now and then. Not get together to write, but we'll just be hanging out and he'll say, "I've got this riff." And I'll say, "Okay, record it on my phone." And then we record a bunch of random riffs on my phone. Then, on the weekends or whenever, at my house, I'll just piece them together on a computer. Add a drum track.
Zach: We pass a lot of stuff back and forth. Sometimes I'll write something and hand it to Brian, and he'll put it all together. Then it will come back to me and I'll say, "Ah, this chorus should change," and we just pass it back and forth.
Brian: And then Alex and Jarret write their own stuff for it. It sounds completely different from the demos, just because they're humans. It works out great. It's really easy to write songs in this band.
Paul: And do you both write both music and lyrics?
Brian: I don't write any lyrics. I don't know how to read, or even count. [laughs]
Jarret: Count? That's a new one. I didn't know you couldn't count.
Brian: I'm just discovering what counting is—where is my Christmas sock? I had a Christmas sock. [laughs]
Jarret: Brian's just been cleaning his feet this whole time. [laughs]
Brian: I just finished.
Paul: We don't usually hear about many bands in the scene from New Orleans. Why is this, and what makes Pears different?
Zach: Because everybody is drunk there. There are plenty of punk bands—and a handful of them are good—and they're too drunk to ever leave. We don't really drink all that much. I don't drink at all, now. Maybe later. [laughter]
Paul: What made you decide to quit drinking?
Zach: There wasn't some big cataclysmic thing that happened. I woke up one day and thought, "Man, I haven't really done anything in ten years." And that was just that. I stopped drinking and I stopped getting fucked up. And now I'm doing things.

Zack and Brian (L to R)

Paul: And the rest of you aren't, is that right?
Brian: I'm not doing anything. [laughs] Neither are these guys. We're all just floating, riding Zach's coattails. [laughter] It's been awesome. It's really easy when he doesn't drink.
Zach: I'm not easy. I'm a pretty difficult guy.
Brian: And I think Zach getting sober helped us out, too, for sure. We used to drink all the time. Now we don't really get wasted like that, ever. I mean, yeah, we do. [laughter] When we have nothing important to do, we can party anybody into the dirt. But we've got shit to do, songs to write.
Paul: Does the culture of New Orleans influence your music at all?
Brian: I think so. I guess it's just the speed of growing up in a city like that, that's the off-and-on murder capital of the world. Zach lives right in the middle of all of it.
Zach: The city is a wonderful place. It's a party town, but it's also an emotional vacuum. And I think that definitely has influenced us. Or maybe that might be projection, too, because I'm a bummer. [laughter] Maybe I could be anywhere, and I'd just be bummed out. Sometimes I think it has something to do with New Orleans.
Brian: I think it does, especially going through Katrina and everybody's different experiences with that. That's a lot to deal with, as a kid. It at least has to mess with your brain chemistry. And what happened messes with the way we write songs or perform them, or our attitude about anything, really.
Paul: How old were you when Katrina hit? You didn't live there [to Jarret].
Jarret: I watched it on the news, though.
Brian: I was fifteen and you [looking at Alex] were fourteen?
Zach: I was sixteen and living with my grandparents, which I now I do again—right before we left on this tour I moved all of my shit back. With hurricanes—you'd evacuate and leave for a couple days, and then come home—most of the time it's not even a big deal. I don't think anybody had any idea of just what was about to happen. So I left with this girl I was sleeping with at the time, under the pretense that my grandparents were going to stay there and ride this thing out.

Jarret, Zack and Brian (L to R)

We're watching coverage on TV and the neighborhood that my grandparents live in is decimated. It was brutal. I was under the absolute impression that they were dead, they were gone. I was fairly certain that the rest of my family was okay. My grandparents were the only ones who lived in the heart, where shit got fucked up.

A week later I finally got in touch with my mother—because none of the phones were working—and she said my grandparents had left the night it hit. They had gone to Florida. I lost my grandparents and regained them in the span of a week. That was a weird thing to go through. I spent a week thinking that the boots and the couple pairs of pants that I brought with me were now the only things that I had. It turns out the house got eight feet of water, but we're on the second floor and everything was all right. The house is structurally intact. They still live there to this day, even though it was gutted out downstairs.

Brian: We practice there.

Zach: Or we did for a long time. Growing up in New Orleans is weird. [laughs] I'm one of three children and I was the mess-up child. That's how I ended up living with my grandparents. My parents were, "Oh, we can't deal with this now. We have two that aren't totally messed up to focus on." So I went and lived with them, I dropped out of high school, and I just started bumbling around the French Quarter, getting drunk and stuff. My grandparents did the only thing they knew how to do, which was give me space and let me handle myself. See, I keep talking, and I'm not talking about New Orleans, I'm talking about myself, which is a ridiculous thing to do. [laughs]

Brian: What about Alex? What would you say your experience growing up there was like?

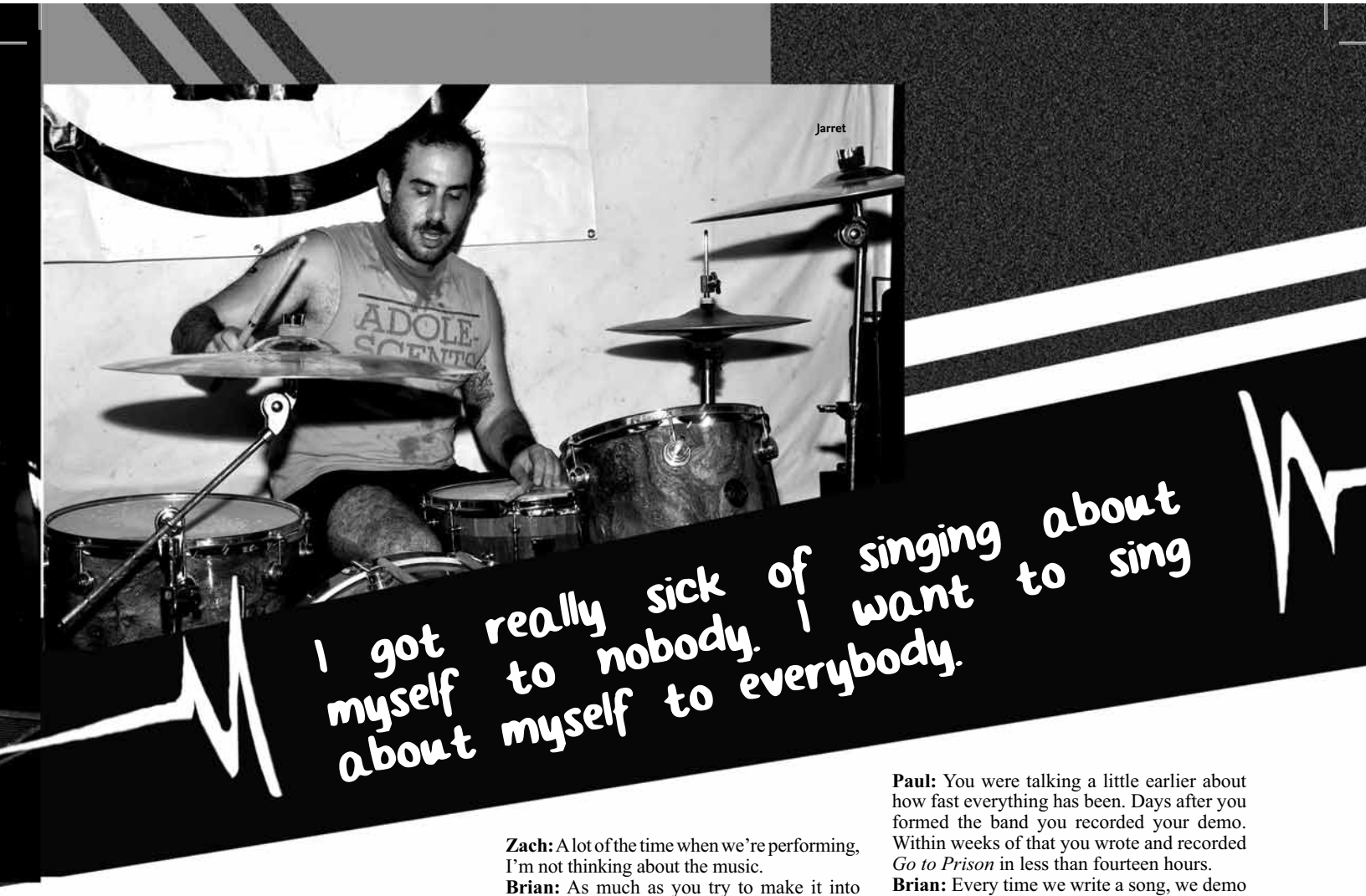
Alex: Pretty normal, pretty average. Eh, I grew up.

Brian: Yeah, it's pretty normal in Harahan (New Orleans suburb). I lived there for a long time. The city is definitely scarier. I live on the Westbank right now, and we get our cars broken into on such a regular basis. A week ago, I walked outside and the guy had left the all four doors of my fiancé's car wide open, on the street. The bus is trying to get through to bring the kids to school and it can't because someone robbed the car. It's absolutely insane because tourists are coming and going all the time. Tourism is the biggest industry in the city.

And if you start working in the French Quarter, you work late nights, you probably work with alcohol, and then you get off work and you're so exhausted from dealing with morons all the time that you just want to drink. And that begins the cycle, the black hole of living in New Orleans. Which Dante (Pears' manager) does, but we got him out. [laughter] Then again, if you live in a nice neighborhood, where people are just legit good people—it's pretty normal and safe and everyone looks out for each other. There are some bad apples, but they get weeded out real fast. I'm just sick of getting my car broken into all the time. [laughs] It's been like, twenty times.

Paul: Let's talk about your live shows. Zach is like a madman, a wild animal. Where does that come from?

Zach: I don't know. I was thinking about this the other day. These guys get to see the worst of me. But I feel like I repress a lot of negative emotions. These are the only guys in the world who I get mad at, or that I show



that I'm angry at. I feel like I let so much go. It feels good to be that way. I feel like the live show is more me than me not during the live show. I'm actually like a monster.

Jarret: He just came up with a name for all the injuries he sustains on stage. He's got a giant scab right now on the top of his head. What do you call him?

Zach: Show-boze. [laughs]

Paul: How did you get Show-boze?

Brian: That one's from dragging his head across the floor.

Jarret: Good thing you got those shoes for your feet, man. They were killing you.

Brian: He's been wearing snow boots so he wouldn't hurt his heels when he stomps on the ground. [laughs]

Zach: I wonder, sometimes, why there aren't more people doing exactly what I'm doing. Because I feel like it was such an easy decision. It slowly developed into what it is now.

Brian: I guess the whole thing is as wild-looking as it is because it's naturally that wild. If we weren't performing the music the way we do naturally, it would look so stupid. And a lot of bands look stupid doing what they do because it's not natural. Or they're trying to do something that's already been done. I can't figure out how we look live, even watching the videos. I'll think, "That looks really strange," because I just don't get it. I can't see it from an outsider perspective because I'm so involved in it on the inside.

Zach: A lot of the time when we're performing, I'm not thinking about the music.

Brian: As much as you try to make it into a routine, you still do completely different things all the time.

Paul: It seems that since you burst onto the scene about a year and a half ago, you've been touring all over the country, nearly constantly.

Jarret: Home is boring. [laughter] Doesn't everyone agree?

Everyone: No.

Brian: Not doing this is boring.

Zach: I don't agree with that, either. I just don't know what else to do. At least I feel purposed.

Brian: And it's fun right now.

Jarret: It's nice being in a new city every day. I don't even talk to that many people. I'm not one of those people who makes friends instantly and parties. I just like my physical body being somewhere different all the time. It's comforting, for some reason.

Zach: I just think that my life is so not what I had imagined that it would be, and I'm really unhappy with my life.

Paul: What did you imagine it would be?

Zach: I think I always wanted to have a really quiet, normal life. Now I have the polar opposite of that. And I'm disappointed in so much, but in a roundabout way that also drives me to do this even more. That's what it is, every night. That's the shows. That's what I'm thinking about. I get to get up there to be disappointed. [laughter] And to express that disappointment. I'm disappointed in me, I'm disappointed in you, I'm disappointed in all of us.

Brian: I'm not. I'm proud of you guys.

Paul: You were talking a little earlier about how fast everything has been. Days after you formed the band you recorded your demo. Within weeks of that you wrote and recorded *Go to Prison* in less than fourteen hours.

Brian: Every time we write a song, we demo it. The demos (*In Diapers*) are the first three things we came up with—and we immediately recorded, as soon as possible. But then when we got good at it, everything was getting demo'ed as it was getting written. What was the rest of that question?

Paul: Basically, what's your hurry? [laughs]

Zach: There's a whole world to conquer! [laughter]

Brian: Do you realize how many good bands there are in Japan right now? We've got to get really good before we go over there.

Paul: Okay, you self-released your first album. It was re-released by Ryan Young (Off With Their Heads) on Anxious and Angry. It was released in Europe by Gunner Records. And now it's been re-released by Fat Wreck Chords.

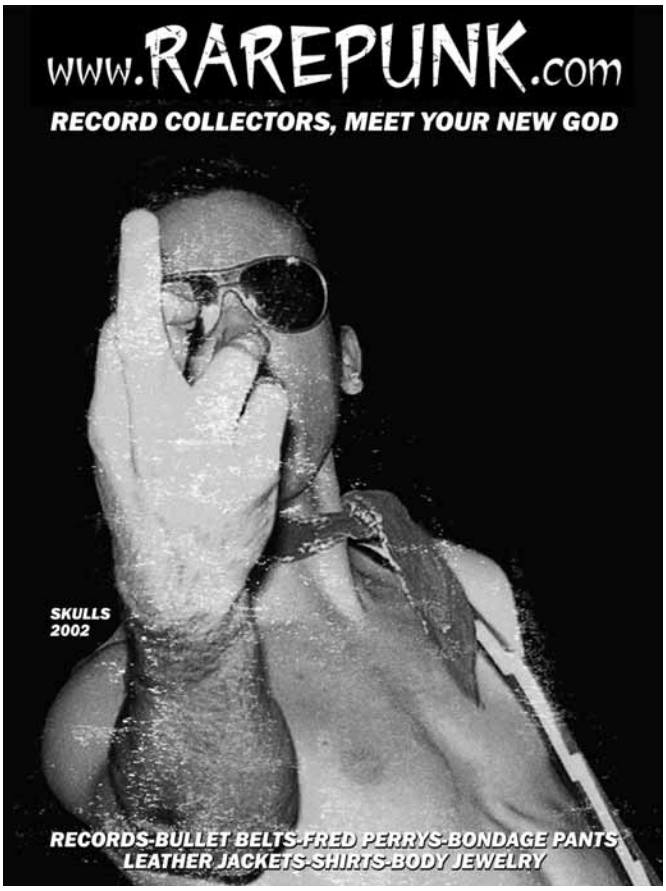
Zach: We don't plan to ever release another record. [laughs]

Paul: And you have another EP and an LP coming out on Fat. To what do you attribute your rapid rise?

Alex: Ryan Young.

Zach: That's actually a real thing. Ryan Young, just being so supportive of us, and immediately giving us an audience. That dude had to have helped us skip two years of playing to nobody.

Brian: Jonathan from Red City Radio, too. He played our CD release show, which was the next big show after we played our first show with Off With Their Heads. And he liked us so much that he's our booking agent.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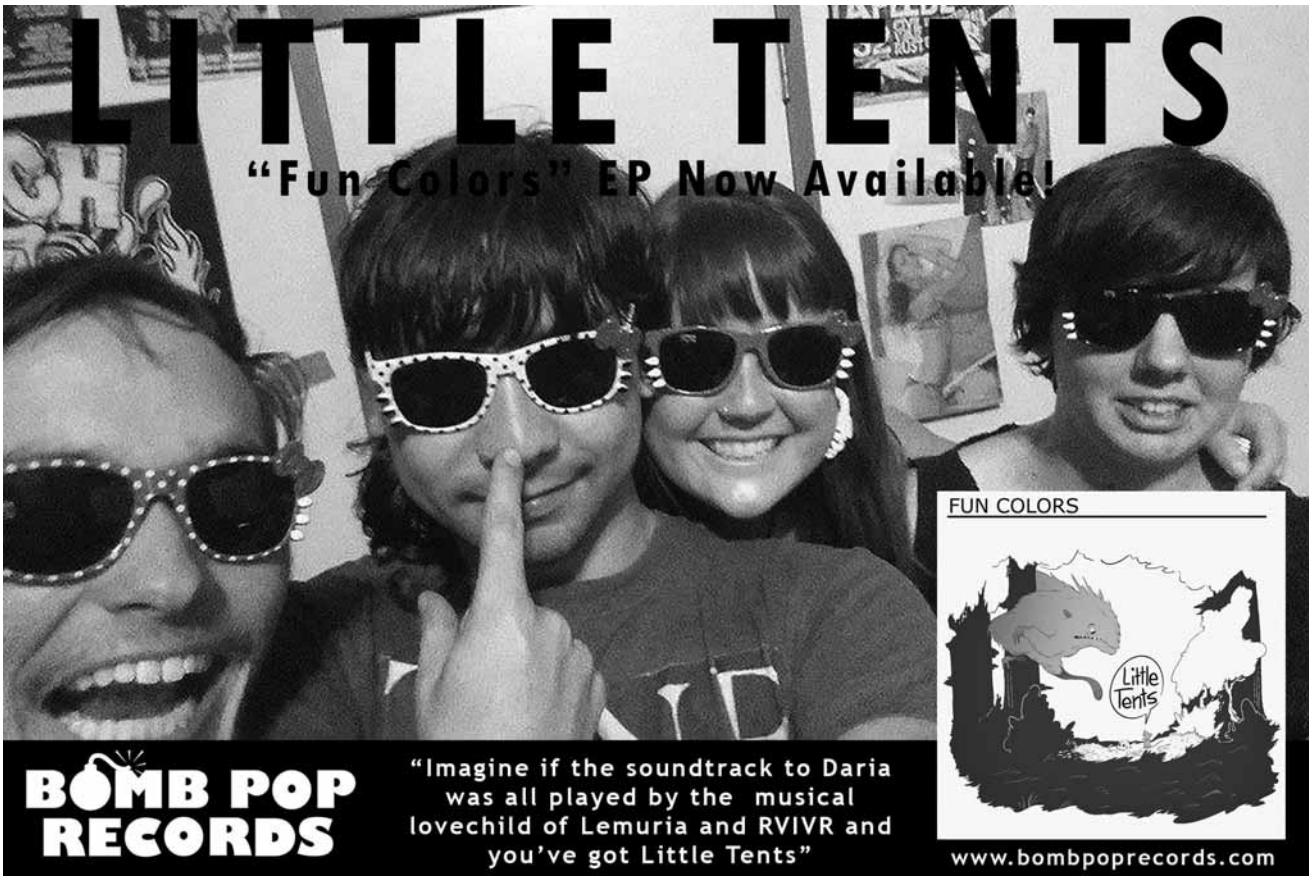
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Alex

He just came up with a name for all the injuries he sustains on stage. "Show-boze"

He did it for free, forever, just so I wouldn't have to slave over booking shows, which used to drive me absolutely insane. We have a lot of people like that around us who help us out. It's not like they did this for us, but they helped us exponentially.

Zach: Besides that, I'd say, absolutely, just the constant touring. Everybody always says that if you want to move your band forward you have to tour. And it's the truest thing about this that there is. You also have to be good.

Brian: Alex didn't quit his job until two weeks before we left for the first tour. I told him, "Dude, you better quit that job. We're about to fucking go. We're not going to stop."

Paul: Was it in the plan to get signed really fast?

Brian: Yeah, the whole time we were saying, "Yeah, we're going to get signed by Fat Wreck." [laughs]

Zach: That's not even a joke. We would say, "When we sign to Fat…" [laughs] before we ever had spoken to anybody.

Brian: They don't know that we used to joke about that, but we were joking.

Zach: No we weren't. [laughs]

Jarret: That was always part of the plan.

Brian: I still can't fucking believe that happened. [laughs]

Zach: Yeah, I think we're all still in shock a little bit.

Paul: You've also already had your first European tour. Had any of you been outside the country before that?

Zach: I had done a short tour in Brazil with an old band. That was really cool. That was the only time I left the country before we went to Europe.

Jarret: My old band Push Ups played a show in Toronto for one night and that was it—about a year before I moved down to New Orleans. That was the first time I had been out of the country. So, going to Europe was insane for me.

Alex: I did a student ambassador program in high school called People to People, set up by Eisenhower. I went to New Zealand and Australia because I was a huge nerd and did well in high school.

Brian: I'd only been five places total, besides New Orleans. [laughter]

Zach: When he says he's been to five places, he means to the Jack in the Box…. [laughs]

Brian: I've been to McDonald's. I've been to Blockbuster before it closed. I used to go to this CD store called Wherehouse Music. Now I go to the Mushroom when I buy CDs. And then, sometimes, I'll go to the bathroom. [laughter] Sometimes I go to bed. Other times I do all those things in bed. [More laughs.]

Paul: You've played small clubs, and you've played in large rooms with major acts such as Strung Out, The Dwarves, Teenage Bottlerocket...which do you prefer?

Jarret: I like the small shows, the divey shows at the bars and really small places that can get packed out. Those are the most rowdy and the most fun. But nothing beats having good monitors—[everyone nods in agreement]—just being on a good stage in a big place where everything sounds great, especially behind the drum set. When we play in dive places, I usually can't hear shit, let alone even my kick drum. But both are good. Both are very different. Having good sound is really a luxury.

Alex: I think it's unfair to give an answer because we've headlined smaller shows and we've always played to people who might not necessarily be there to see us at bigger venues.

Brian: Yeah, no matter what we do, people aren't really there to see us half the time.

Alex: I can't make a distinction between the two yet.

Jarret: But if you take the fans out of the equation, I'm right. [laughs]

Alex: Always. [laughs] No, I don't give a shit about monitors. I know how to hear something and follow it.

Jarret: Oooooh!

Zach: I prefer the small, divey stuff. I like when a room feels packed.

Jarret: Last night was great! Last night was a tiny dive bar called The Maverick in Yuma. There was a good amount of people there and it was nuts.

Zach: Also, though, I really like big rooms and big stages when there are people.

Jarret: Like Punk Rock Bowling.

Brian: Punk Rock Bowling was one of my favorite shows, too.

Zach: I really like that, because I like that elevation of a real stage and being able to perform that way. There's something powerful about that. But, at the same time, things like Punk Rock Bowling don't feel right in the middle of the day.

Jarret: Dante is really good at our lights and he didn't get to do anything at Punk Rock Bowling.

Zach: I feel like the spirit of the group is better served in dim, tiny rooms.

Brian: I also really enjoyed touring with Strung Out and opening ten minutes after doors to nobody. Because the twenty people who were there, trickling in, would be like, "What in the fuck did I just walk into?" And they would all buy merch, every single one of them. And we would win, for sure, twenty or twenty-five fans every night—then sit back for six hours while the show happened, party and do nothing all day, and not even use our own cabs. It was awesome. [laughs] And Strung Out cooked for us, twice!

Alex: No, Strung Out's fans cooked for us. [laughter] What are you talking about, they cooked for us?

Brian: They cooked for us in that parking lot.

Jarret: They bought us pizza.

Zach: Hey, Jordan gave me a cookie!

Brian: All I know is Strung Out cooked for us.

Alex: They did not. It's not true.

Paul: What does the future hold for Pears? What is it that you want to accomplish?

Brian: We want to be the biggest band in the whole world. [laughs] No, I don't know.

Zach: I want to take this opportunity to spiral out of control [laughter] with an audience, and then, in fifteen years or so, we'll play our final show to no one in North Korea. [laughs] And we will call it a day.

Jarret: How about we sell out three dates at Wembley, instead of two, like the Foo Fighters. [laughs]

Brian: We'll do that before North Korea. That's way before North Korea. That's two years from now. [laughs]

Garrett LaBonte—guitar/voice
Jacob Brown—drums
Jordan Brown—bass

FUGUE

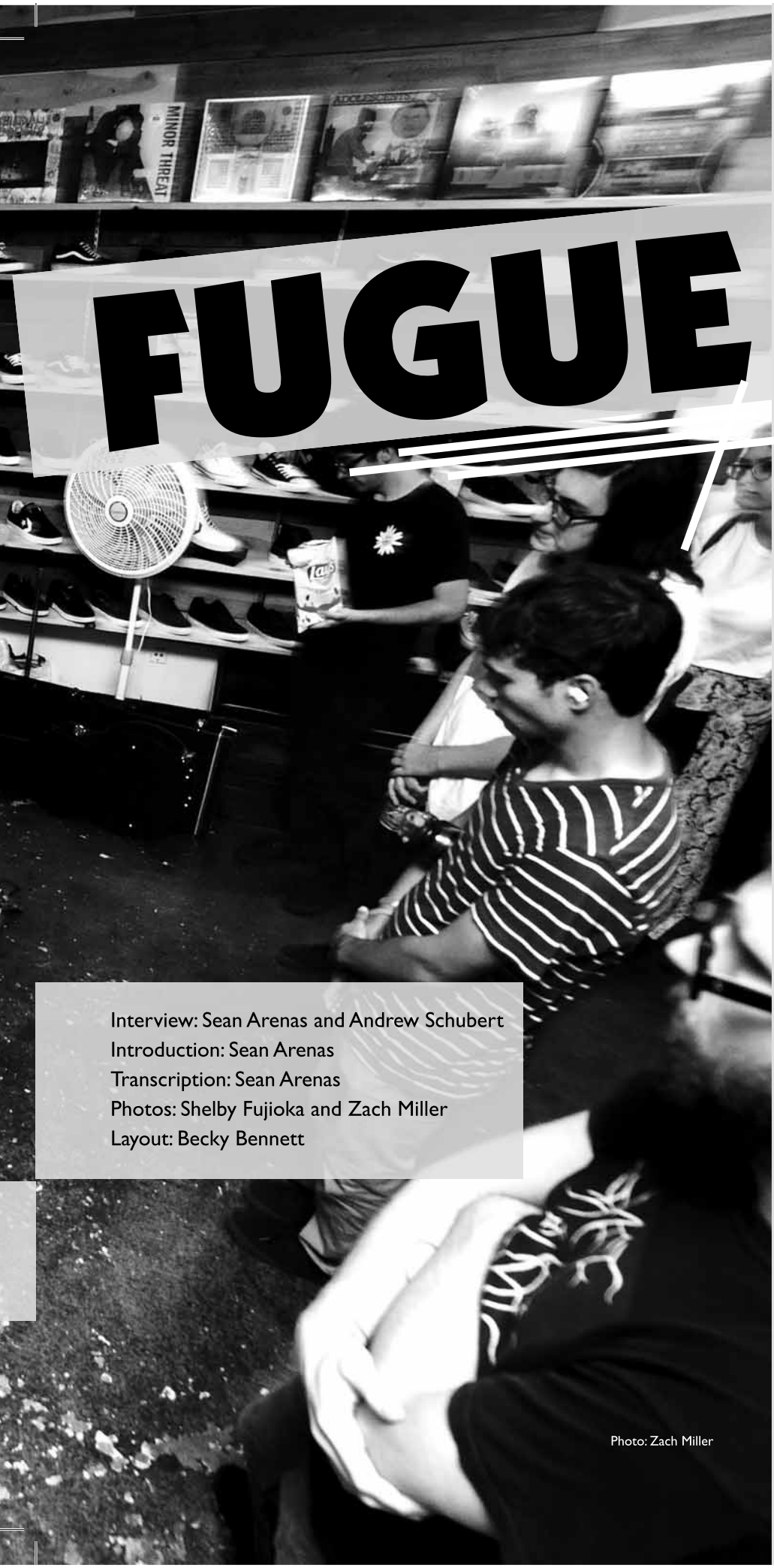

Photo: Zach Miller

Interview: Sean Arenas and Andrew Schubert
Introduction: Sean Arenas
Transcription: Sean Arenas
Photos: Shelby Fujioka and Zach Miller
Layout: Becky Bennett

Trios are tricky. Each member must be aligned in a perfect triangle, experiencing shared synapses. Each instrument has to be pronounced. There is no room for slacking off, no time for wasted measures.

Fugue is a three-piece from Yorba Linda, Calif. The trio channels their struggle to reconcile their religious upbringing and punk values into spastic, frenzied outbursts. The anger subsides, giving way to exhaustion—ultimately relief and rebirth as self-actualized people independent of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

They have stratified audiences along the West Coast with their unique, uncompromising form of Unwound and Karate-fed punk. Audience members are either instant devotees or open-mouthed onlookers who must process Fugue's angular—yet melodic—barrage.

Guitarist and singer Garrett LaBonte crafts abrasive riffs that conjure David Pajo of Slint, melded with Southern California hardcore. Garrett's hair-trigger vocals transform from hauntingly mellow into full-bodied, therapeutic yells. As his screams ramp up, the listener physically experiences Garrett's frustration.

Siblings Jacob and Jordan Brown complete the triangle. The brothers share a rhythmic wavelength. Like Brendan Canty and Joe Lally of Fugazi, Jacob and Jordan are at once broodingly minimal and the band's driving force. Jordan's bass lines are the foundation for Garrett's dissonant riffs, while Jacob pummels his drums with a clarity that breaks through the walls of distortion.

Fugue is never pretentious or melodramatic. No artifice, no cheap tricks, no gimmicks—just longtime friends exorcising personal demons through achingly earnest music. And stimulating eardrums in the process.

Sean: What is LaBonte?
Garrett: It's French Canadian. It was a name manufactured when my family came to Canada. When certain immigrants would come in through the U.S. during the early 1900s, they would have to make up new names or their name would be misspelled. I think the original last name was Bonte.
Sean: Have you ever been to Canada?
Garrett: I went for the first time last summer on tour.
Jacob: I was the most tired I've ever been in my life. I almost fell asleep in a public Canadian bathroom. We had just driven for thirty-six hours on two hours of sleep and were visiting my brother who was going to school at the University of British Columbia. We were at the beach. I walked in the restroom and there's three inches of water. I'm sitting on the restroom thing [toilet], hand on face, and I literally fall asleep. [laughter]
Sean: Where else did you play?
Garrett: This was part of our Northwestern tour last summer (2014). We only played one show in Canada—Vancouver, British Columbia. Somebody told me about these people, Office Space. They're a group of kids that do DIY shows. The place they booked at was so cool. It was a bingo hall and roller rink at one time.
Jordan: A huge hardwood floor hall.
Jacob: They put up some sort of shitty divider in the middle. One side had a lot mirrors and posters. The other side was a hallway, and they were like, "Oh, we'll just put a stage."
Garrett: Office Space—oh, wait, it was Office Party, excuse me. [laughter] They were connected with a non-profit that had a connection to the city. Basically, that building was supposed to be torn down and turned into apartments, but the owner couldn't get the permits. The non-profit swooped in: "Hey, while you're waiting two years to get your permits, can we host all-ages events here at this hall?"
Sean: Who did you play with?
Garrett: This band Taxa—and Mormon Crosses, who sounded like a Burger Records band if they got really sad and dark.
Jordan: And Canadian. [laughter]
Jacob: They wore Doc Martens and kept on their jean jackets even though it was ninety-five degrees in the room. Getting across the border was definitely a charade with a van full of stuff. They sat us in this room and took our passports. They had to call the booking person. To play shows in Canada, you need to have a permit if you're going to make money.
Sean: Did you tell them that you were probably not going to make any money? [laughter]
Jacob: They had to verify that we were playing a show that was strictly donation-based to therefore let us in and not tax us.
Garrett: The girl who booked us the show put together a form for the border. She told me she faxed or emailed it to the border office. We get there and the guy is like, "I have no idea what you're talking about." That apparently was not a thing they do. [laughter] I showed the guy the emails and they looked up the venue. If they sold alcohol, we'd have to be charged for that, too.
Jacob: "This is her number. Call her," I said. She didn't pick up.
Garrett: After an hour, the border officer just gave up. "All right, you guys can go."
Jordan: It happened to Taxa, who played that night. The guitarist had gone across to the U.S. border and not gotten a work permit. He came back and was permanently banned from the U.S.
Garrett: For two years.
Jordan: After two years, you can apply to get the ban lifted, but you have to pay two grand and fill out an application. But they can still say no.
Jacob: I went to a Bank of America to swap out my Canadian money and the guy wanted to give me eight hundred bucks. "Man, I don't know if I want international fraud on my account. I don't think that's right." He's like, "Oh shit, man. You're right. Here's forty bucks." [laughter] Meanwhile, Jordan and Garrett were waiting in line for some smoked salmon chowder. They're like, "Dude, we're almost at the front of line!" "Hold on for a goddamn second. I don't want international currency fraud on my bank account!"
Garrett: Some people have some extremely awful tour experiences. Ours was getting too much money on accident and losing our space in line for smoked salmon chowder.
Sean: And getting politely hassled at the Canadian border. [laughter]
Jordan: It was a cool tour. We played seventeen shows in fifteen days.
Garrett: We started off in Provo, UT.
Jacob: We have family friends there. We crashed at their ranch.
Jordan: The people who owned it weren't even there. We never saw their faces. We came in at two in the morning and never even saw them.
Jacob: We still haven't seen them. [laughter] We grew up with these people. We hadn't seen them in seven years and still haven't seen them since.
Garrett: We played Rexburg, ID.
Jacob: Which was the most depressing twenty-six hours of my life.
Garrett: I don't know; it was better than no show. We didn't get paid anything and three people were there.
Jacob: We got milkshakes!
Garrett: And burgers.
Sean: Where did you play?
Garrett: It was a burger and shakes place. [laughter] It was called Sammy's.
Jordan: That's why we played. We were up on stage and there were a couple of passersby. In the other room, there were moms enjoying their burgers and shakes.
Garrett: Roman Candles (acoustic songwriter Christopher Gordon) also played. When our show stopped, BYU (Brigham Young University) jazz bands came to rehearse. Rexburg, ID is basically a college town for BYU. For those who don't know, BYU is a private school owned by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
Sean: Were the burgers good?
Jacob: They were perfect. They even had veggie burgers.
Garrett: Provo and Rexburg are very conservative cities. Christopher Gordon was not having a good time. "I'm having to watch my language and act really reserved." Once we got to Missoula, Mont., Chris went wild. We played a house show and it was definitely the perfect summer experience.
Jacob: Probably one of the coolest two days of my life—maybe because the days before sucked so bad. When we got there, we pulled up to the house. "Oh, man." Shitty little punk

Our awful tour experience was getting too much money on accident and losing our space in line for smoked salmon chowder.

Photo: Zach Miller

house thing. Then this very attractive woman answers the door.

Garrett: Five attractive women answer the door.

Jacob: First, it was her. She was like, "Hey, are you with the band? Cool. Let me get my sister." [laughter] Who is another very attractive woman. After two straight days of hot uncomfortableness, it was fucking great. We set up and more friends show up. They were super nice and accommodating. It was a Santa Cruz vibe in the middle of an awesome forest. Right before this, we hit this lake and people were fly fishing and jumping off bridges. This was an oasis. People just partied and hung around until three in the morning.

Garrett: Chris Gordon grabbed all the beers he could and sang some of the crudest songs. [laughter]

Jacob: This was week five for him. He toured *then* met us. He was pretty much losing it at this point.

Garrett: He toured everywhere in the U.S. except where we were going. The day he got home was the day our tour started. Right before this tour, Chris wrote some very visual lyrics about a phallic situation. He just belted it out after two days of suffering. At this point in the tour, we also started to talk to each other in Southern accents. [laughter]

Jacob: "Hey der, brother Garrett."

Garrett: We would try to outdo each other by saying stupid shit. "Hey der, brother Chris, why don't you come over here and sit up on this here lap?"

Jacob: Southern accents were a good distraction.

Garrett: One last story about Montana. These guys wanted to go back to the river, and I was rivered out. [laughter]

Jordan: We swam every day at least once. We found lakes, rivers, anything.

Garrett: They were river-ing it up and I think, "This'll probably be the last time I'll be in Missoula, Mont. for a while, so I'm going to just walk to downtown." I hear music and see food trucks and families.

Jacob: And lots of feather earrings.

Garrett: There's a Johnny Cash cover band playing. I get a Baskin-Robbins cookies-and-cream ice cream cone and walk around in my hat and comfy shoes. I watch this Johnny Cash cover band, with my ice cream in hand, while the sun is going down and think, "This is it. This is the greatest moment of my life." [laughter]

Jacob: Meanwhile, there's a standing wave a hundred feet away in the river. Guys are surfing it. They throw their boards out and pump this thing.

Jordan: It was so weird to see it. There's a surf scene in Missoula, Mont.

Garrett: In Spokane, Wash., we played a squatter punk house. It was gross. It was called Mars. They kept bragging, "We had a hundred people come to our last show!" They also kept bragging about how weed was just legalized. "You can smoke in the house. It's cool!"

Jacob: It was so smelly in that house. I wanted to die. It was worse than a lady who has nine cats and litter boxes inside. Everyone was smoking while watching the bands. Garrett has asthma issues…

Garrett: And I'm allergic to cats. [laughter] There are nine people there and they have no PA. I just went for it. I sang as loud as I could. I wrecked my voice and felt so sick. We didn't want to sleep in that house. We were probably going to smell like cigarettes for the next three months if we slept there.

Jordan: Chris ended up sleeping on the floor in that house, while us three slept in the van. We didn't know if Chris was going to be alive the next morning.

Garrett: We actually considered driving overnight to Seattle because we didn't want to sleep there. The next night we played Ground Zero, which is run by Jason Clackley of The Exquisites. We played with this rad band called The Doormats. They were supposed to be a three piece, but their drummer wasn't there so the bassist played drums and the guitarist played bass. Some of the lyrics were like, "My uncle Jimmy! He took me fishing!"

Jacob: "He died last week!" [laughter]

Garrett: It was the angriest seventeen-year-old music I've heard in a long time.

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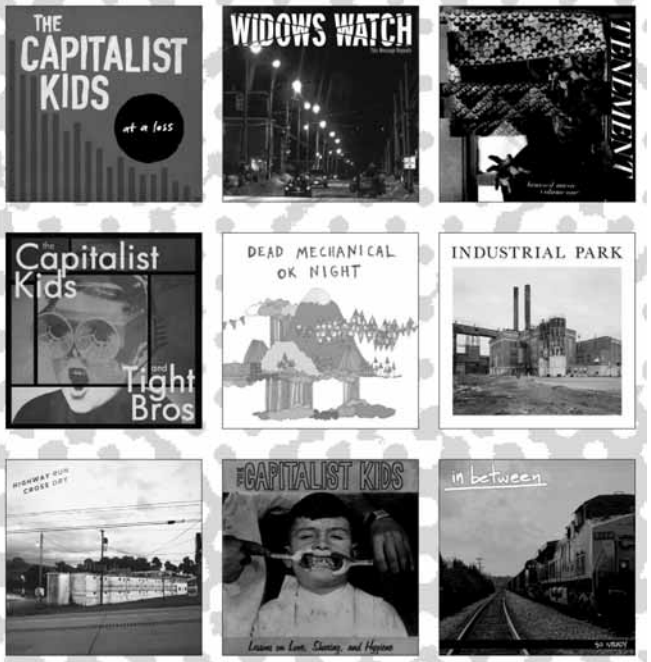

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Jacob: And they were wearing overalls with no shirts.
Jordan: And sandals.
Garrett: Since Chris was going into the Peace Corps, he didn't have his passport. The Peace Corps had his passport, which meant he couldn't go into Canada with us. He stayed in Seattle with some friends of ours. So Chris got pretty drunk. For an hour and half, he played "Landlocked Blues" by Bright Eyes but made up ridiculous lyrics.
Jacob: Our friend pushed him out the front door, like, "Leave!" But she left the window open and he climbed through the window still playing the song. We can't see him, the door is closed, and all of a sudden a leg comes through the drapes. [laughter]

Punk just makes sense. Just do what makes sense to you and find a way to make it happen. Even if it's against the social norms, as long as it's not destructive.

Garrett: Then we went to Taco Bell.
Jacob: Randomly, after Canada and heading back to Southern California, we got added to a generator show in the forest of San Luis Obispo. We showed up and the generator didn't work. Step one to a generator show: Make sure the generator works! [laughter]
Garret: I played by myself and it sucked.
Sean: What's the Fugue origin story?
Garrett: I actually met Jake at boy scout snow camp.
Jacob: Our two troops hated each other. This was twelve-year-old rivalry nonsense. We were just throwing snowballs and beating up on his troop. Then I saw Garrett and I was like, "All right, bro, you're on our team."
Garrett: I was on the verge of turning alternative and growing out my hair. [laughter] I think Jake was like, "Cool. Fellow long hair, come with us." He had curly surfer hair. We've known each other a while and went to high school together. In 2011, that summer, I joined a punk band called Loughton, which didn't last long.
Jacob: I drummed for that band.
Garrett: But I really wanted to start a band where I played guitar. I tried out for Canyons on guitar, and they didn't let me play. Later on, I joined Canyons on bass. Eventually, Jake and I started to talk about music. Jake has his own thing called Pelican Vision, and he really wanted to *actually* learn how to play drums. Jake, at that time, was really afraid of computers. He thought computers were witchcraft. He'd come over and be like, "Hey, can you get on the Craigslist machine and search this for me?" We found this Pearl Export black drum set, and he bought it.
Sean: Why were you scared of computers?
Jacob: I just hadn't been around them very much. It's ironic because now I work at a tech company. [laughter] We work for a web design company called Mopro. I do account management there and Garrett does VIP tech stuff. It's funny because I was so terrified of how computers work. Now, I advise people daily on web design.
Jordan: A true success story. [laughter]
Jacob: Back then, I wasn't the most digitally literate. I've come a long way.
Garrett: Also, we were in media production class together in high school. I had to help Jacob out a lot with that.
Jacob: We made a lot of PSAs. We made a video together about lockdown drills and wrote a metal song for it. "Lockdown!"
Garrett: Using GarageBand loops.
Jacob: We filmed people in class. "Oh no! Lock the door!"
Garrett: We also did the weekly announcements. We did the dumbest things. Jake would climb in a tree and be like, "Hey, what's up? Want to join the reading club?" [laughter] After Jake got his drum set, I started to play guitar more. Our first goal as a band was to learn a song by Karate ('90s indie jazz band). But with two of us it was boring. Jake suggested his brother, Jordan, and I was like, "Oh, I don't know." Me being a jerk. Jordan started to play with us, and we ended up writing our own song that sounded like Karate. Fugue is basically a Karate cover band.
Jacob: Karate wannabe.
Sean: How does your family react to being in a punk band?
Garrett: My parents are still in the mindset: "That's cool, but I think you're putting too much time into it. You really need to learn how to make cabinets. You need to learn how to fill out paperwork. You need a really good suit so you can go door-to-door and sell alarm systems." My mom told me when we released our 7", "You put a lot of money into this. Are people actually going to listen to this?"
Jordan: No. [laughter]
Jacob: The first time we told our older brother that we were putting out a cassette, he was like, "Ha! Why?" We told him it had a digital download code, and he was like, "Okay."
Sean: What was it like growing up Mormon only to enter the punk scene?
Jacob: It was exactly what I was looking for. Mormonism didn't really vibe with me. I grew up taking it really seriously in middle school and high school. I was being pressured to be something that I didn't want to be. Music became an extremely enlightening outlet—especially hardcore punk when I was nineteen, twenty. It helped me decipher things in my mind and in ways I can't describe.
Sean: Did punk provide an alternative community?
Jacob: Community, yes. But more an outlet and the ability to be okay with who I feel I am.
Jordan: That's where a lot of the emotional angst of Fugue comes from, relieving this pressure on all three of us. Especially seeing us live. We wrote those songs to alleviate pressure and to come out and play as hard as we can.
Sean: Isn't that what a fugue state is? A mental dissociation? Was the band name a conscious decision?
Jordan: It was all calculated. [laughs]
Garrett: Talking about it right now, it's freaking me out because it all makes a lot of sense. The idea of Fugue, as a band, is a separation from the world as it is for a moment. This escape to a different path. My favorite records are ones that suck you in. I want music to be an experience. I want somebody to be emotionally drawn in. Our band is not religious or anti-religious. These themes are our lives. It's what we know more than anything. This is how we grew up. On our record, *No One Else*, there are a couple of songs that address a conflict with morals that make sense in the manufactured bubble world of Mormonism. You put these morals in the real world and it doesn't make sense. And it's freaking me out because I built everything on these values.
Jacob: For Jordan and I, we were raised to live a double life. You can be yourself in a

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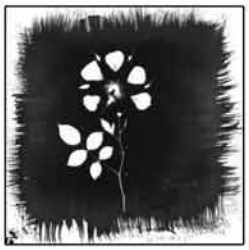

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certain area, but you can't be that person when you're in this specific religion. When we play live, what comes out is the ability to be and express who we are. It's a liberating feeling to be able to not think and to let it flow. It's something that's reactive and emotional and moody.

Garrett: I've never felt more like myself than in this band. No other band feels like this. I can put all of my heart and soul into it for thirty minutes. It's a weird Christian analogy, but it's like a rebirth.

Jacob: We can't help but cross the line into religion, because that is where we're coming from.

Sean: Did you feel like you weren't free in your personal life?

Jacob: No.

Garrett: I felt like I wasn't letting myself be free.

Jordan: You can't be free when there's an insane cultural standard where everyone is expected to live and be the same way. You keep climbing this ladder.

Jacob: What happens if you don't fit in? Then you get ridiculed.

Jordan: This is our way of dealing with not being on that ladder, stepping off that ladder, transitioning into normal life.

Jacob: Our mother has history all the way back to Mormon pioneers, but our dad was a frat boy from UC Santa Barbara. The majority of our family is not Mormon. Growing up, there was this weird disconnect. We'd go to church, but I wanted to hang out with uncle Joe and slam beers. Wait? Now I'm supposed to feel bad about that? There are two sides to this coin. We got to be straight-laced, but the rest of our family doesn't see things that way. Having to deal with those two ways of looking at life is very conflicting. How the fuck do I figure this out? Not to mention girlfriends that aren't Mormon. Oh god! [laughter] This culture does not encourage that sort of interaction.

Jordan: Fugue allows us to be fluid in our personalities rather than constantly judging ourselves and living a contradictory life. Just accurately expressing our beings to each other is where Fugue comes from.

Jacob: Hopefully our new music resonates with people out there. Some kid out there struggling with a social conflict like we all did. "Oh my god! Thank you for saying that."

Sean: Was it scary to enter the punk scene?

Jacob: It felt so good.

Garrett: Punk—when I was thirteen—was Green Day.

Jacob: He wore a red tie and a black shirt freshman year. [laughter] No eyeliner, though.

Jordan: Or gelled hair.

Garrett: Punk just makes sense. Just do what makes sense to you and find a way to make it happen. Even if it's against the social norms, as long as it's not destructive. I need to always do something that's constructive. Punk made more sense than anything I had ever experienced in my life. What I was scared about was, "Am I going to have to make a decision one of these days?" "Am I going to have to give this up?" This means more to me than any other experience I've had. My family, friends, and music are important to me, but this music went into my beliefs and made sense.

Photo: Shelby Fujioka

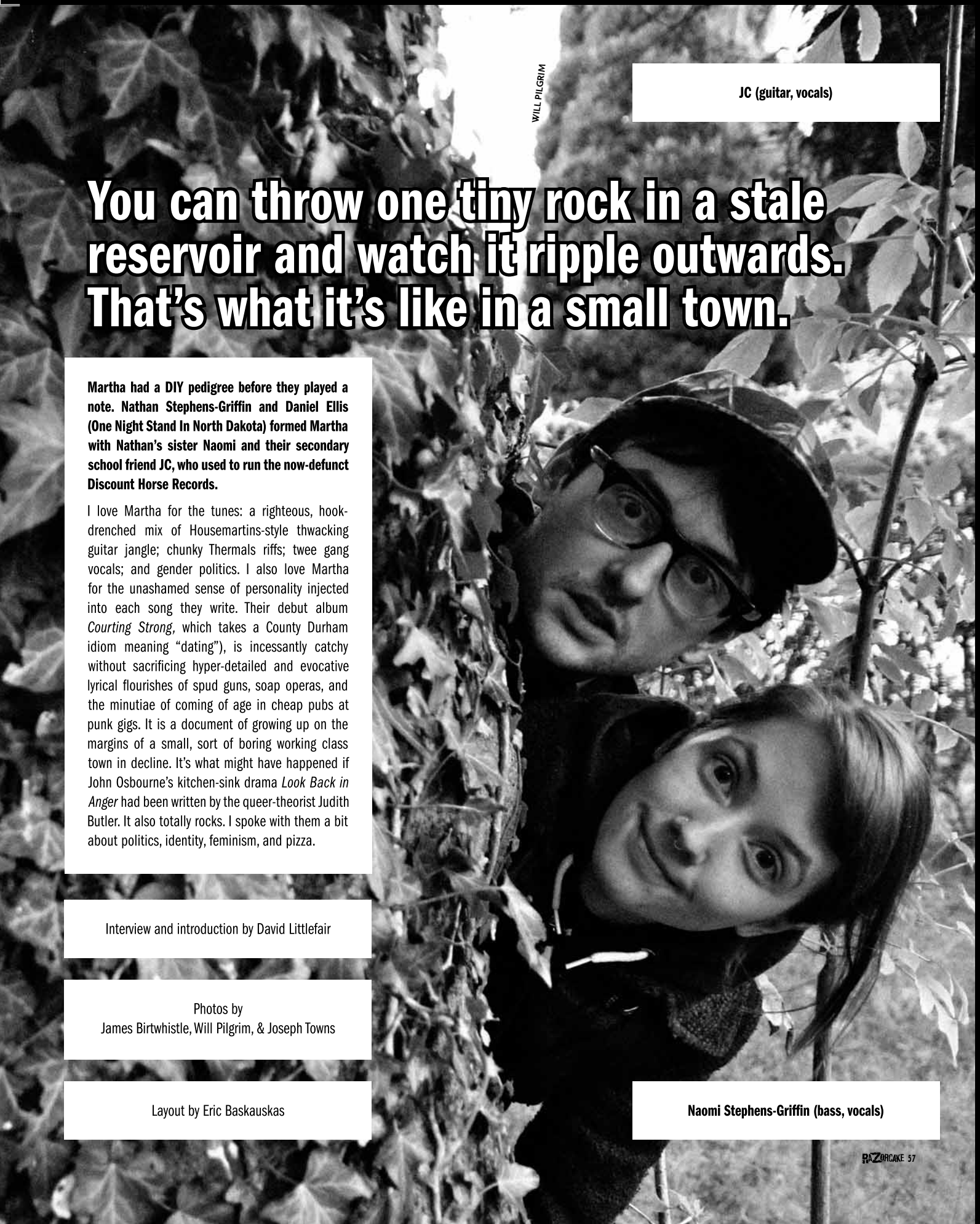
But then I felt like a shitty person for liking punk. I had to deal with a lot of shame. And the shame was more from myself. My parents are not perfect. My dad broke up our family. He divorced my mom. Things have been rough. I love them, but they aren't perfect examples. I'm not on a path to destroy one facet of my life and to hold the other higher up. But I couldn't handle the shame. I felt terrible about the person I wanted to be, the things I wanted to do, and the people I wanted to be around. I didn't like being around the people in the church. I felt like I was a being a shell. Going to hardcore punk shows, that was me more than anything. I connected with it more than anything I read in scripture. Jordan's right. We've put pieces of our lives into the music. That's why it means so much to us.

Jacob: It's more for us than our audience.

Garrett: Fugue is ripping off all of the shit that covers you in the day and whipping it all over the room. The best punk bands are the ones that write for themselves.

Jacob: And they play so hard that they're about to vomit afterwards, which happens to me about two-thirds of the time. I pack up my drum set and I'm choking down puke. If I feel like my right arm got thrown out, I know that was a really good set. I just put my whole self out there.

Daniel Ellis (guitar, vocals)
Nathan Stephens-Griffin (drums, vocals)
AARKTHA



WILL PILGRIM

JC (guitar, vocals)

You can throw one tiny rock in a stale reservoir and watch it ripple outwards. That's what it's like in a small town.

Martha had a DIY pedigree before they played a note. Nathan Stephens-Griffin and Daniel Ellis (One Night Stand In North Dakota) formed Martha with Nathan's sister Naomi and their secondary school friend JC, who used to run the now-defunct Discount Horse Records.

I love Martha for the tunes: a righteous, hook-drenched mix of Housemartins-style thwacking guitar jangle; chunky Thermals riffs; twee gang vocals; and gender politics. I also love Martha for the unashamed sense of personality injected into each song they write. Their debut album *Courting Strong,* which takes a County Durham idiom meaning "dating"), is incessantly catchy without sacrificing hyper-detailed and evocative lyrical flourishes of spud guns, soap operas, and the minutiae of coming of age in cheap pubs at punk gigs. It is a document of growing up on the margins of a small, sort of boring working class town in decline. It's what might have happened if John Osbourne's kitchen-sink drama *Look Back in Anger* had been written by the queer-theorist Judith Butler. It also totally rocks. I spoke with them a bit about politics, identity, feminism, and pizza.

Interview and introduction by David Littlefair

Photos by
James Birtwhistle, Will Pilgrim, & Joseph Towns

Layout by Eric Baskauskas

Naomi Stephens-Griffin (bass, vocals)

David: A lot of your music and identity as a band is based around where you live and where you grew up. Can you talk a little about Pity Me and Durham, what it was like to be a kid there?

Nathan: There are three of us from Pity Me. Our mams and dads still live there. JC lives in Chester–le Street just down the road.

Naomi: Pity Me is just a really small village—an ex-pit village (settlements that sprang up around the North East mining industry). The kind of place where kids have to make their own fun. It's pretty tiny.

Daniel: Three of us—me, Naomi and JC—went to the same school and started playing music at school. We learnt DIY before we knew what it was, just by there not being designated venues. We've been doing it for a long time. In a small town and a small scene, you need to make your own fun.

David: Nathan, when I first met you the band you were in was called Speeding Bee. [laughs]

Nathan: That was the first band that did anything outside school. I was in a few bands in my parents' basement. One was called Zedmore. We did a cover of the Ghostbusters theme.

Naomi: Speeding Bee and Daniel's band Loki played together.

Daniel: And me and Naomi were the same year at school. We're celebrating our twenty-five-year friend-iversary this year.

JC: I was a lot younger than these guys. The local bands at our secondary school got me into the scene.

David: Growing up in Sunderland (small city nearby Durham, famous among punks for spawning Leatherface), I was aware of Durham having a serious reputation for punk, but punk alone. Is there something to do with the town, history, the infrastructure of the punk scene that brings people to make that music?

Naomi: I think Durham has a strong history of hardcore gigs. There was a strong hardcore scene when we were teenagers—we went to shows at a place called the rowing club (Durham Amateur Rowing Club, a hardcore axis notable for early gigs from bands like Bane and Count Me Out). We went there at the tail end of things just before it was shut down. But there was one record shop there called Concepts—if you'd heard of Blink or something and went there, the guy behind the counter would be like, "Oh you're into that? You should try this."

Nathan: Durham isn't known for anything except mining, the cathedral, and—when it comes to music—brass bands, Prefab Sprout, and punk. Is it a small town thing, is it a working class thing? I've not thought about that but there's always been punk and hardcore in Durham.

Naomi: There were hardcore shows every week when I grew up. They weren't all-ages necessarily, but they'd let you in.

Nathan: I think part of it is that in a small town one band or one scene can have an influence that can ripple out. If a band like Voorhees ('90s Durham hardcore legends) got big—for a hardcore band—that had a butterfly effect that rippled out. Now you have two people from Durham in the band Eagulls, playing on *Letterman*. You can throw one tiny rock in a stale reservoir and watch it ripple outwards. That's what it's like in a small town.

David: You recently toured with Milky Wimpshake. Pete Dale from Wimpshake ran Slampt Records. Were you aware of Slampt as teenagers in Durham?

Nathan: Actually, my first exposure to Milky Wimpshake was at Concepts, thinking, "This is a cool band name and a cool pink cover," but I wasn't aware of Slampt. We were probably too young.

Naomi: One thing about Pete is that you find you're asking him, "Was that *you* who put that record out?" but he's really modest about Slampt.

David: That label seems to have influenced every band in the North East, punk or not. Even our pop and indie bands like The Futureheads know about Slampt and emulate the ethos to an extent by doing a lot of the work of releasing their records themselves.

Naomi: It'd be inevitable that they'd influence you just by you living in the North East. No Fit State (Newcastle punk band) were really influential for me personally and politically.

David: I also feel like Milky Wimpshake and No Fit State are people whose politics and ethos are reflected in their lives as a whole. They strive to live them, not just in the music they make, but the things they do outside the band. You guys are a lot like that too, right?

Naomi: Our veganism is something we couldn't sing about without living it, and we're always organizing stuff as a collective. We run a non-profit vegan café, trying to show that vegan food can be nice and also affordable.

Nathan: We think a lot about the kind of people we give a platform to at the shows we do and the kind of people who'll get heard through them.

David: You're also studying and working in an academic capacity on these values too, right? Nathan you wrote a Ph.D. thesis on queer theory and veganism. Naomi you're also a Ph.D. graduate, too, though I'm not sure what of?

Naomi: My thesis was about DIY punk, but also cultural activism more generally.

David: So there's academic bedrock behind what you do?

Naomi: Well, that comes after.

Nathan: The stuff we do is the bedrock!

Naomi: I studied a lot of gender, sociology, and politics. When I started reading up on activism I realized all of this stuff I read about was happening in front of me. The Ph.D. became a way of making my hobby—well, much more than my hobby—into my Ph.D. rather than the other way around.

I don't want to undersell my academic credentials but it was also the path of least resistance in a way. I was on the dole (welfare) for a year when I graduated and it was one of the most horrible experiences of my life. I applied for a lot of jobs and for funding for a Ph.D. It so happened I got the funding. It was so flexible to be studying. I had a year of temping that was similarly frustrating, and I got the same opportunity for funding and went for it. It was a rose-tinted glasses thing: "Oh university was fun." When you go back, it's like, "Oh god. It wasn't."

Nathan: But it makes it easier to tour.

Daniel: You can skive off (fuck around) and be in a punk band.

David: A lot of Martha's music alludes to the challenges of making life in a small town work. Your song "Move to Durham and Never Leave" goes, "It's killing me to think that everyone will move away/ I'm still here hanging on."

JC: In the North East there have been decades of asphyxiation under successive right wing governments obsessed with crushing working class folks, and there's a higher concentration of those in the North East. Now we're living under a regime that's hell bent on crushing any artistic creativity. I identify as working class and I'm living in an area where there's so little opportunity for working class people. The university is pricing out working class kids, too. Studying there is a good gateway into the arts. But if you went to university or not it doesn't matter, because there's no work. I can't think of the word. I want to say it's deprived….

Naomi: With arts jobs it's the same. I have friends who would want to stay, but if they want to do anything in these kinds of fields—it can be hard. As an academic, the advice is to just move to get the jobs, which I don't want to do.

Nathan: It's becoming an increasingly radical idea just to not move for your career. Things like family, community, friendship—things that are the bedrock of happiness and being a well-rounded human being—are seen as dispensable now. You get made to forfeit them for your career.

Naomi: I do have a job at Beamish museum (a mock-up Victorian town that's a North East tourist attraction and educational center)! It's not quite using my skills, but it's a laugh.

Nathan: The point is that it's a political thing. The decisions of powerful people have been that the North East isn't valuable. "There's nothing to invest in and we should focus our attention on other places." That's why the North East is one of the most deprived places in the whole of Europe.

Naomi: The only thing there is to do is train in healthcare.

Daniel: Getting by on NHS (National Health Service) funding isn't easy either.

Nathan: It is hard everywhere, though.

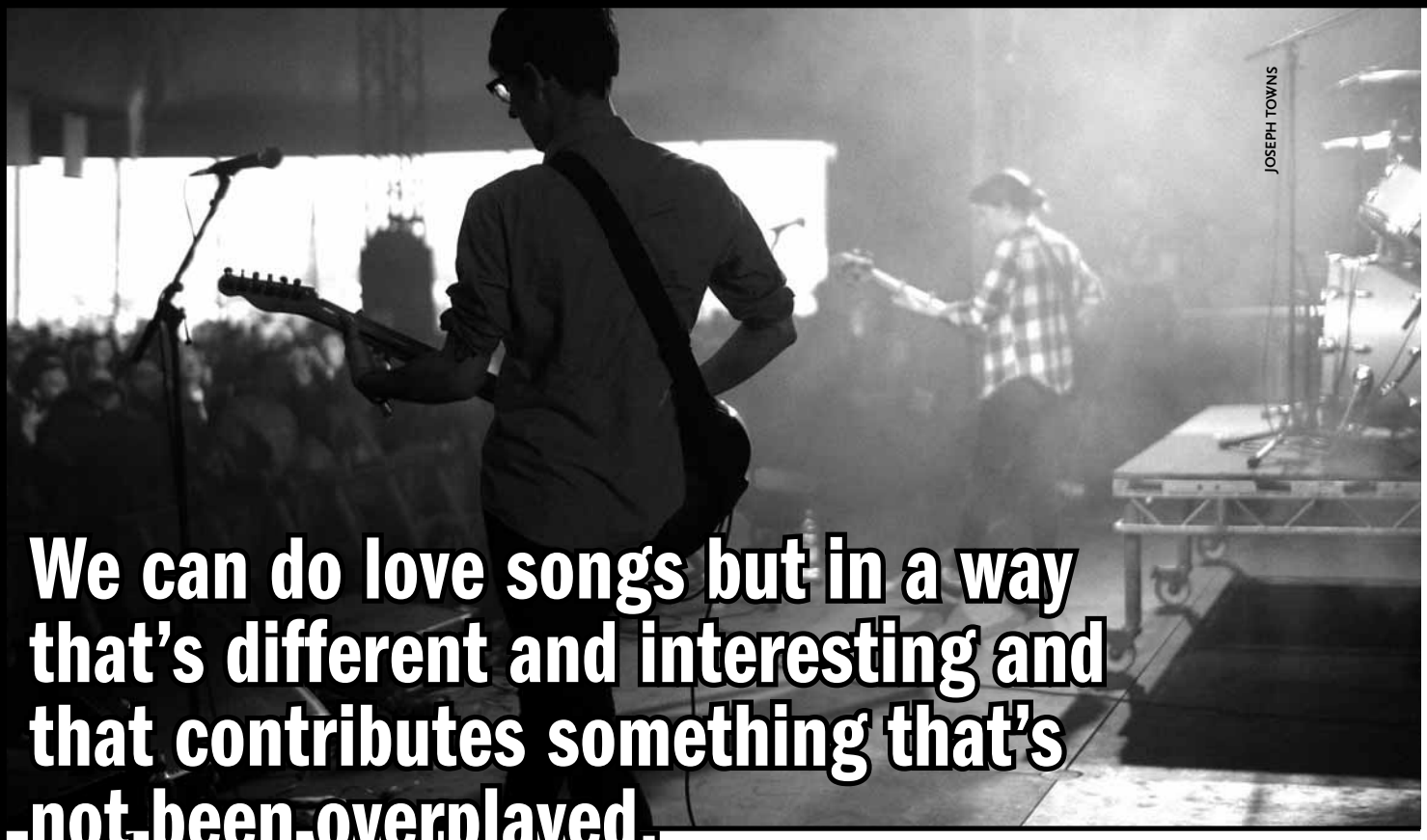
Daniel: The system favors the privileged, too. They can get by being skint (broke) for a few years whilst having lofty aspirations. For other folks it's harder. It prices people out of good, honest work.

David: Is refusing to leave a middle finger to that system of social pressures?

Nathan: It'd be a shame to think of it as purely born out of anger.

Naomi: I genuinely have no desire to leave Durham. There's no "career" that'd be enough to make me want to leave. Because the punk

We're living under a regime that's hell bent on crushing any artistic creativity.


JOSEPH TOWNS

We can do love songs but in a way that's different and interesting and that contributes something that's not been overplayed.

scene is such a big part of what we love about Durham, that makes me want to stay. It's not a "fuck you" to The Man kind of thing.

Nathan: The "fuck you" is to the idea that you *have* to leave to be anything in the world. To contribute to culture in any way you have to get out of the shithole that is the North East. It's a "fuck you" to that certainly.

David: I wanted to talk about how far your politics stretch into the mainstream, too. Nathan and Daniel, last time I saw you was in May of 2015 as ONSIND (One Night Stand In North Dakota). It was just after the general election and were visibly downhearted about the Tories winning again.

Nathan: It was the day after the elections. Daniel and I were driving down to the Deadpunk Alldayer in Bristol. You know all those albums about George Bush that shit American punk bands wrote, that were made irrelevant overnight after the election? The same happened for ONSIND's song "Pokemon City Limits" and it was a really crushing feeling. Not that 'Ed Miliband' would have been any kind of savior, but it was really gutting. We opened with "Pokemon City Limits" that night, and it was deafening having the lyrics sung back at us so loud. ("Never trust a Tory / they'll betray you when it matters.") Maybe it was all completely pointless, but it was so completely cathartic—shouting at the world about how undemocratic and awful that whole process is.

David: As anarcho punks, how do you feel now that we have Jeremy Corbyn (described by Fox News as a "bearded vegetarian socialist") leading the Labour Party?

Nathan: I'm no great fan of electoralism or the machinery of government. We shouldn't look to individuals. Individuals are flawed. Even Jeremy Corbyn is someone that will eventually let us down… or die. [Laughs] I don't want to overstate anything, but as politicians go he's quite good.

Daniel: Woah, woah. [Laughs]

Nathan: Just let it be known that my view is we put our faith in people, but I did pay my £3 and voted for Corbyn. Having him stand opposite David Cameron at Prime Minister's Questions—you can't imagine how radical that is, it's a monumental thing. Ultimately though, his success was borne of grassroots activism and that's what needs to be focused on, not getting swept up by his geography teacher personality. [Long pause] But "hopeful" is the short answer.

David: Martha are big fans of old pop bands from the '80s that were sympathetic to the Labour movement or had openly Marxist policies: The Housemartins, Paul Heaton, Billy Bragg. Those bands were involved in a political lobby called Red Wedge. I know supporting a political party like that is not traditionally something punks would do, but could you see that kind of relationship between music and politics coming back to the mainstream in a similar way?

JC: I don't think there's been anything like that since Red Wedge—and Jimmy Sullivan of Bronski Beat. You don't get radical pop music now. The closest is like Paloma Faith (British pop star) taking Owen Jones (an openly socialist *Guardian* columnist) out on tour to open with her. Beautiful South did radical pop really well. The Housemartins were more overt with it but The Beautiful South were really successful. When you know their politics you can really see that coming through. They were raging against some really fucked up stuff, but you won't get that in the pop charts now.

David: You actually played with and were booked by Billy Bragg to play Glastonbury. Could you ever follow his example of engaging with party politics?

Nathan: It think it's dangerous to associate yourself with a party. The Labour Party might have a left wing leader but still a good proportion of the party is made up of neo-liberal Blairites. Having said that, we're playing in October at something associated with the People's Assembly, which to all intents and purposes is what Jeremy Corbyn would've been doing if he wasn't the leader of the Labour Party now, speaking at those kinds of events. It's called We Shall Overcome. There are gigs all over the country and to get in you bring food for the local food bank. We're doing one in Scarborough. Because we're weird and because we like small towns, I guess. We'd play political events but we'd not play a party conference.

David: I've read that you take the politics right down to minutiae in writing songs. For instance, when you were writing "Sleeping

Beauty," Naomi had written about "Nerf guns" and that was changed to "spud guns" to not give Nerf the free advertising. Is that something you always pay attention to?

Daniel: We did own Nerf guns though, and we do songs that advertise Listerine.

Nathan: And we're basically advertising Irn Bru (a carbonated Scottish soft drink) pretty much all the time—posting pictures online, asking for it on riders, among other things. We're complex hypocrites.

Daniel: We do have a new song that we're working on that does say "Irn Bru," but then we made sure it doesn't say Irn Bru a lot of times. It just says it the once.

Nathan: It goes "Irn Bru, I love you."

Naomi: "Gonna spend all my money on you."

Nathan: Really though, I did actually have a spud gun.

Daniel: And I do actually own a Nerf gun.

Naomi: I guess if it doesn't make any difference to the meaning of the song, it's good to avoid the brand.

Daniel: It's an aesthetic choice as well, like spud guns fit with the time. Kids have Nerf guns now but it was spud guns then. That's our childhood.

David: Your U.K. tour with Radiator Hospital has an incredible poster, a comic layout with scenes from a relationship between two *Coronation Street* (British soap opera) characters on it. What's the story behind that?

Nathan: That new song we were talking about has a line in it about Curly and Racquel from *Coronation Street*. It's about the idea that the epic romances that we grew up with were between people like Roy and Hayley (also from *Coronation Street*) and Curly and Racquel. They were the stories we knew and that shaped us when we were young. We said to Jack Fallows, who is the most incredible artist, "Can you do something with this concept of Curly and Racquel?" When I saw it I was welling up. It was so sad. It was such a beautiful tour poster—and I've no idea whether Radiator Hospital get it. [Laughs]

Naomi: Probably not, although there's references to the Radiator Hospital record all through it.

David: How did the split 7" with them come about?

Nathan: We met Sam and we'd obviously been into the band. And we'd said, "You should come over," and we'd been emailing and kept in touch—then eventually it was going to happen. Andrew from Specialist Subject suggested that we do a split together to have something to sell on tour that we could press over here.

Daniel: Then we were like, "Eeee we'd better write some songs"

JC: So we did. Don't worry. Our side will have songs on it.

Naomi: Musically, they nicely straddle the same punk/indie pop sound.

Daniel: And Sam is a really funny guy. Just like us. We're all funny guys.

Naomi: Also we've had giant slices of vegan pizza together.

JC: In Washington D.C., it went down as the Salinas Records pizza party. Martha was there. Radiator Hospital was there, Ambulars. It was a hell of a night, giant pizza. This big… [Makes hand gesture indicating a pizza of notable proportion.]

Nathan: It was in a twelve-inch pizza box, for one slice, so it was twelve inch—just radius.

David: Was vegan food better in America?

JC: We do it best in Durham city!

Nathan: The thing about America is you can't get decent bread, and you have to pay like five or six dollars for hummus.

Naomi: Cheap vegan food is hard.

JC: In this country, you can get a tub of hummus for fifty pence and some pitas for sixty pence. That's £1.10 for a meal for a couple of days.

Nathan: When me and Daniel were in Kansas, all we could get was peanuts.

Daniel: From a proper greasy petrol station.

Nathan: And head to toe in oil. There was oil *on the outside* of the peanut bag.

David: Previously you've put records out with Fortuna Pop! and Oddbox Records, both of which put out more indie pop than punk. What's it like to make the move to a label better known for punk for this release?

Naomi: It's funny. The LP came out on Fortuna Pop and then Salinas in the States, and Salinas is much more of a punk/DIY label, but then indie pop's much different there.

Nathan: It's much less compartmentalized than the U.K. Fortuna Pop isn't really a DIY label, although it is just one guy (Sean Price). He started it maybe ten years ago.

Naomi: And him and Pete from Milky Wimpshake go way back.

Nathan: We'd got to know him as a person, he was really cool, and he was up for doing the record. That's always the thing if we're doing a new record, is just to see what offers are there—and its usually one person, or none—then we say "yeah."

And the conversation we kept having was—with the exception of Andrew—there probably aren't many punk labels in the U.K. I can think of on the top of my head that we'd actually fit in with.

Naomi: It's more we don't know about them, not, "Oh we wouldn't work with them."

Nathan: What I mean is a lot of the punk labels are all dude bands—and un-self-aware about it. That's never been the scene we wanted to be in. We never wanted to grow into some U.K. version of the bro punk scene.

Naomi: That's definitely the appeal of Fortuna Pop as well. It's much more diverse.

JC: And the bands they've put out recently have something to say that we want to be associated with. The Spook School are one the best queer punk bands in the U.K., and Alanna who used to be in Joanna Gruesome is fighting the good fight. Those are the kind of people we wanted to share labels with and that's the same with Specialist Subject.

Nathan: Our second record is on Fortuna Pop! in the UK and Dirtnap in the US. We're really excited about that because Exploding Hearts, Marked Men, Mean Jeans…so many bands that we absolutely love are on it.

JC: And it's one hundred percent fucking mint.

Nathan: Oh, I forgot to mention Drunken Sailor—an amazing DIY punk label from Stoke. Julian has done a couple of releases for us. That's another thing with these quite strict definitions of genres. When it comes to deciding what label you want to work with it's always much more complicated than that—"Do we know the person who runs it?" "Are the other bands nice?" "Do they care?" "Is it going to be fun?"

Naomi: You always know when you're playing an indie pop gig because we get described as "muscular," and it's like, "Wow, we've *never* been called that as individuals."

Nathan: That's because Daniel had his vest on.

Daniel: And I've got my Nerf guns out.

David: What got you started writing on subjects like gender?

Daniel: Well, we write about what we know. We do have fictional elements to our songs but a great deal of the subject matter is from experience.

Nathan: When Daniel and I were starting Martha, it felt like an opportunity for a different kind of songwriting. I want to say, "A whole new world," [laughs]… not the *Aladdin* song, but a new world of space to write about things without the expectation that we were a political band. ONSIND always had a rule—"no love songs"—because there are so many dude acoustic bands that do those. Now we can do love songs but in a way that's different and interesting and that contributes something that's not been overplayed. That's why we write with stories.

Naomi: Rather than write about a certain political thing, when you write a story, you can weave the politics through it. It'll be more nuanced.

Nathan: Even our ONSIND stuff since Martha is way better. It's more based on stories now, too. It's become a dialectic where one informs the other. It's a continual learning curve that never ends, until I'm sixty-six and I'm elected leader of the Labour Party.

Daniel: And you'll either let us down, or die.

Nathan: Or both.

David: What motivated you to write a song about something like Seneca Falls, the first-ever women's conference?

Nathan: The first thing I would say about that is I've taken an active decision to shut up about feminism. Obviously I'm still an ally. But maybe before I was in a place where those ideas weren't articulated, whereas now I'm in a scene where there are plenty of people involved. It's part of the need to do something unique. That song is about resistance and about how if you put faith in each other you're much stronger. It also mentions Frederick Douglas (social reformer and former slave) and lots of other stuff that's not directly related to a white guy from Pity Me in Durham. Maybe I wouldn't set out to write a song like that now because it's not really my struggle to write about. I'll be an ally the best I can and I've decided the best way to do that is to shut up.

JC: It's about not taking up space.

Nathan: They say—and I agree—that if you're a male feminist ally you're not to take

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up space in feminist circles but to go into the world and create space for feminism. Before I felt that was what I was doing, but now we're in a milieu that I'm a lot happier in and a lot more comfortable in and we're in a political scene where there's a lot being articulated. And for me to come along and say, "That's what I feel about this" is pretty pointless.

David: Are there particular themes between these songs that inform what you write about?

Nathan: That song "1848, Yawning Discreetly" is about being a person of privilege within a struggle, and the line, "Such onerous privilege, take me and make me sing," is saying, "Let me drown in it all, make me the best person I can be, let me learn from these amazing people; together—in strength together." These are moments that have defined the history of radical protest, so it was an obvious starting point. Also the Distillers have a song called "Seneca Falls." [Laughs] So punk bands have already written about it. Whereas we also have a love song about the people of Gretna Green—a historic train crash, and those locals finding out that the biggest train crash in British history was just a mile away. Writing this tragic ghost story love song from the point of view of a dead person was much less obvious. I guess the first record we did was just about finding interesting things to write about, which has continued with the new record.

David: Something else relevant to what we've been talking about with gender and politics is the T-shirt you've been selling through Common Goals to raise money for the charity Gendered Intelligence. How did you end up making these T-shirts?

Nathan: Daniel and I had done one before for Right to Remain through ONSIND.

It's a guy called Jack who's in The Cut Ups and his friend Nathan and we raised £500 for Right to Remain which was amazing. I think we came across Gendered Intelligence online. I follow a lot of stuff of Facebook….

Naomi: A friend of ours had been telling me about it not that long before.

Nathan: We've a song called "Sleeping Beauty," which is about coercive gender socialization, and when we were doing the shirt that was coming out as a single…. They're a good charity.

Naomi: And one that's not very well-funded.

Nathan: They do lectures in schools and trips and camps—taking a group of trans kids away camping.

Naomi: You can make this much for a big charity but you'll make a really big impact with a small charity.

Nathan: Both of the charities we've helped out aren't actually charities I don't think—because to be charities you have to be politically neutral, which is bullshit, so it's important to support those organizations and what they're doing.

David: I've just realized when we were talking about Durham, we didn't mention the Miner's Gala (a large annual gathering in Durham associated with mining and trade unions) that you marched at this year. Can you tell me about that and how you relate to it?

Nathan: Daniel and JC's granddads were miners.

JC: The North East has a history of coal mining. It's a big place that's full of small villages just built around coal mining. So a pit village (like Pity Me) has a particular character—terraced houses, remnants of some sort of coal mine.

Daniel: Also that really strong community spirit of not moving away has run for generations.

JC: We're lucky being close to the city. Some of the pit villages are way more isolated—they closed the last of the mines in the '80s and they're really up against it.

Naomi: And that's the Miner's Gala. It's a coming together of all the different villages and areas.

Nathan: And the brass bands from those collieries—a lot of them still exist. A lot of it is the workers' Marxist political tradition. All the collieries have banners of Kier Hardie, Nye Bevan, and Tony Benn—unfortunately mainly white men—but socialists at least. That's a big part of who we are as people.

Daniel: This year we marched with LGSM—Lesbians and Gays Support The Miners. They had a banner and we walked with them.

Naomi: The whole day is really emotional, combining hope and disquiet at the same time, which I think is what being an activist is all about. We brought Ellis from Trust Fund. He played our house that night.

Nathan: There was a big gang of us as a lot of us were coming for the show, too.

Naomi: It's good because you see everyone—it's 150,000 people in a town with a population of 30,000.

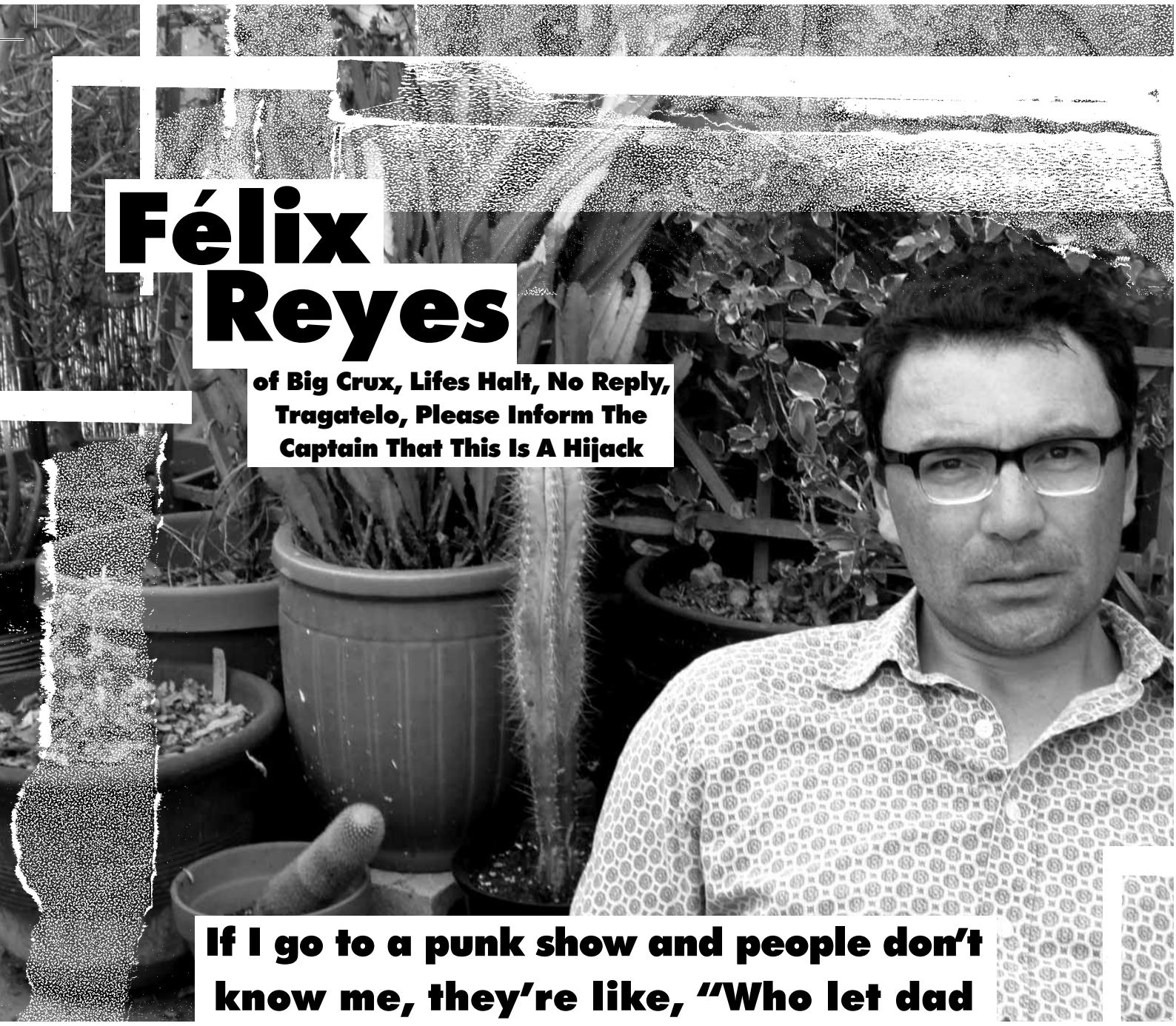
Nathan: Also when the march is finished, it's like a big party.

Naomi: And we go home and hide!

David Littlefair has lost so much money promoting live gigs that he currently lives in a cave and eats grubs for sustenance. He also wasted his twenties in a band called O'Messy Life that nobody even realized broke up. http://twitter.com/omessylife

Félix Reyes

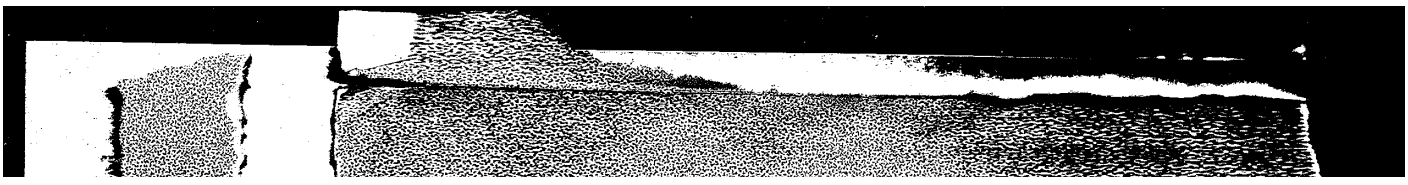
of Big Crux, Lifes Halt, No Reply, Tragatelo, Please Inform The Captain That This Is A Hijack



If I go to a punk show and people don't know me, they're like, "Who let dad in?" [laughs] And I am a dad!

Félix Reyes is a human of many questions. Both for himself and the world he lives in. He is a cultural inspector, examining the fabric that binds us. His story is one of many changes, many evolutions, and many great bands. If you're unfamiliar with Big Crux's 2014 release *Ponchito*, waste no more time. This album is punk of the highest caliber! Filthy in tradition and innovation, execution with foundation. The end product from years of hands-on research. I learned the word portend from the song "Future Cat."

The trends may come in waves, consuming the inexperienced, but authenticity was there the whole time. Calm, collected, sitting on the beach with a boombox and a cooler, watching the show. –Daryl



Interview by Juan Espinosa and Daryl Gussin. Layout by Daryl.

Daryl: Félix, let's start at the beginning of your life. When and where were you born?
Félix: I was born in Los Angeles, Calif. in 1979. The neighborhood I was born and raised in is what's known as West Adams. It may always have been that then, but it didn't have that name prominently displayed. We're talking about a mile west of USC on Adams Blvd., just south of the 10 freeway.
Daryl: Southwest of downtown.
Félix: About five miles, and it's been interesting being in L.A. Every time I come back, just absorbing it all and seeing the places I would go as a kid. Like my mother, L.A. nurtured me, but there is always some rediscovery. Just this morning I was driving near USC and I'm thinking to myself, "I used to skate this whole distance, just to skate this little spot here." And that's kinda neat.
Daryl: What did you call the neighborhood?
Félix: It's kinda in the middle of a lot of places. I guess it's Midcity as well. My aunt lives in what is now called the El Salvador Corridor, but it used to be called Pico-Union in my day. And just south is Jefferson Park, and then there's the USC area. So I would usually just say I live over by USC.
Daryl: How would you describe the L.A. that you grew up in? Especially coming back to it now after living in Seattle for so long.
Félix: I know there are a lot of things that have changed, and I can identify a couple things, such as huge-ass buildings, but it feels the same when I go visit my mom 'cause there's that familiarity of family—of food, of smells, of language. Like the way my family speaks. And I don't hear that all the time in Seattle. That comes back and I reside there. Not living in the past per se, but that's home. When I get back to my mom and my friends of the family, and the places that I mentioned whether it's the USC blocks or the Griffith Observatory, it feels largely the same, but I do see that a lot of the landscape has changed. The architecture, the buildings—like that huge-ass building over by L.A. Live. L.A. Live, in fact, was not there when I left.
Daryl: It was probably just the Staples Center.
Félix: Correct. And that was twelve years ago. Certainly it's changed. That's what happens. "Progress"—shit gets built and things change. People get kicked out and new people move in.
Daryl: What about growing up in the '80s and '90s?
Félix: Very violent. I remember having friends and family who were involved in violent stuff. Myself kind of being young and impressionable. The tagging was big! Early '90s tag-banging was big! The thing is, I can look back at it now and think, "Oh, there was a lot of violence around me." But when I was growing up in it, it seemed normal to have the police helicopters shining their light through your bedroom window at two in the morning. In fact, my daughter, born and raised in Seattle, she's also visiting and she's like, "Daddy, the helicopters at night here, why?" [laughs] "Oh, by the way, I forgot to tell you about that." So yeah, one of my brothers was in a gang, and another was in the party scene—I come from biggish families so there was always a lot things going on around me. For myself, I got involved in skateboarding and punk rock. Got politicized through music, through people who I met, kinda just through the general environment of the state of California and the nation.
Daryl: What year did you go to your first show? And what was it?
Félix: My friends had a band called Tone Deaf. And they would practice and have shows in their garage, so those were my first shows. And we'd go there and slam dance. They liked Nirvana, but they liked DRI more 'cause they were a sloppy thrash band, where Nirvana was…
Daryl: Introspective?
Félix: [laughs] Yeah, introspective and artful. That must have been around '91 or '92. The first big show was Primus at the Palladium, 1993. The summer before I started high school, 1994, was so awesome for me! I was a young punk kid, and I was looking at old flyers and thinking about bands: "This was just ten years ago?! I fucking missed it." And there wasn't anything happening at the time that I thought was organic to the time. But in '94 I got to see (at the Las Palmas Theater in Hollywood) 7 Seconds and Youth Brigade. And to me that was the coolest show ever.
Daryl: 'Cause they were from the '80s!
Félix: [laughs] Right, they were from the '80s, and I was stoked there were these old-style hardcore bands from the West Coast playing. And the show was just bananas! I was thirteen or fourteen, and just having a great time. Everyone is going nuts. It was so early on in my knowledge that I didn't even know what "Sink with California" was. And everyone was singing along and I was like, "What are they singing? This is so cool!" And that summer I also saw RKL, SNFU, all the Epitaph bands that were the older bands, but also the new bands. Like I saw Bad Religion—well, they're an old band, too.
Daryl: Those young whippersnappers in Bad Religion.
Félix: [laughs] Yeah, it was a huge deal.
Daryl: If that's '94, then it's only three years later that you start playing with Lifes Halt.
Félix: Right, so I met Ernie and Charlie—with whom I started Lifes Halt—in '94 or '95. And I'm a skate punk kid. So I like fast stuff and the old style stuff. I'm skateboarding at USC, and some kid had a backpack with a Minor Threat patch, a straight edge patch, and A Chorus Of Disapproval patch on it. I was like, "Oh cool, whose backpack is this?" And Ernie said, "Oh that's mine. Is it in the way? I'm sorry." And we just got to talking and we got along really well. And Ernie started taking me to straight edge shows in Corona and Orange County. I dug it because it was energetic, and that's the stuff that drew me to punk rock in the first place. Just the fun energy of people stage diving and singing along seemed really fun to me. I really got into going to those shows; particularly Strife shows were really fun. And I really got into Mouthpiece as well. [laughs]

I don't know why. But I always liked what would be considered skate punk. I still remember when I discovered Ill Repute. And it was just like, "Yes! This is what I love!" It was fast, and tuneful, and kinda sloppy. And it seemed really cool to me. And of course, the straight edge stuff is a pretty far cry from that, especially when it was more metallic. I didn't—and still don't really—like the metal stuff. Ernie was more into the "chug-chug-dunnnn." I couldn't get into it. If you listen to the early Lifes Halt stuff, Charlie brought in more of a heavy chugga guitar sound, and I brought in the fast punk stuff.
Daryl: You brought in that Primus bass.
Félix: I brought in the Primus bass [laughs]. 'Cause I like Les Claypool. I do like bass. I like bass a lot. I know it can be over the top, like Les Claypool. But anyway. [laughs] We started a band in '95 called Revulsion. We played a few shows at the Peace And Justice Center in downtown L.A.
Daryl: So '95 or '97 starts your "hardcore era"—you start Lifes Halt, you're also playing in No Reply. You go on to play in Tragatelo and Please Inform The Captain That This Is A Hijack. These are all hardcore punk bands that you played in consistently for a good chunk of years.
Félix: Yeah, Lifes Halt was the big one. The one that got it all started. Met a lot of people from Orange County and Ventura County. Nice people. They liked our band and supported it. '97 or '98 I started with No Reply as well. In 2000, Lifes Halt and No Reply did an East Coast tour and a split 7". Tragatelo and Please Inform The Captain came later. Through Lifes Halt and No Reply, we kept meeting cool people. We met Martin from Los Crudos. We already knew of them from about '95 when me and Ernie were at Zed Records in Long Beach and he found a 7" that was in Spanish and it was the first Los Crudos EP. And it was in the punk section and so we loved that. That influenced Lifes Halt a lot later on. So yeah, I guess '97 is kinda the start.
Daryl: To me, it just kinda seemed like that's when releases start coming out that you're playing on. And then for the next seven years, you release a good amount of records of fast, hardcore punk bands.
Félix: Yeah, that's what I was into. Lifes Halt was the springboard. Tragatelo again, just to finish that up a bit—I met Lina from Subsistencia, which was a Chicano roots punk band. They were cool; we played with them and got along. Martin we met from Los Crudos, and their music influenced us a lot. Mike from Esperanza, a band that happened

LIFES HALT, 1998, MATT AVERAGE

At a punk show....the type of event that actually takes place is the socialization of sizing each other up. "How punk are you?"

NO REPLY, 2000, MATT AVERAGE

later, played guitar. Anyhow, Tragatelo started, it was kinda short lived. But we did some releases.

And the other big influences on our music—personal and political worldview—were the people from Former Members Of Alfonsín and Bread And Circuits. Just positive and progressive and radical. "Radical" in that the world we live in is right-wing based so anything that's not right-wing based can be considered radical. But they were these really cool people—Sara Kirsch, Alex Frixione, Jake Hockel—our friends who were in these bands that were really supportive of Lifes Halt. And their music was not necessarily like ours, but it was just the ideas around it.

And the identity of who we were, and what we were doing, and how it was challenging even within a punk context. A punk status quo. My friends were more apparently Latino than I, but to go to shows in Orange County—especially straight edge hardcore shows—it doesn't take long to realize that you're a small group of people. Your culture, your language, where you're from, is a different dynamic in that context. We witnessed some things, and felt things about our place in those shows. Not necessarily with people we knew, but people we didn't know who might have just been show-goers themselves. They embodied an entitled, self-righteous, Orange County, middle class wealth, white, male, dominant tone. Basically, frat boys, future cops. That was part of our politicization process. "Is this a place where I feel that I can fully express myself? Or be myself?"

Daryl: Lifes Halt did a full U.S. tour.

Félix: Yeah.

Daryl: There must have been some shit on that tour.

Félix: Yeah, there were a couple places where we had to deal with people being arrogant and obnoxious, and literally looking down on us. 'Cause they're pretty big guys. And when we flew to Chicagofest in 2000 we got kicked off the plane and banned from Northwest Airlines, supposedly for life. I don't know if that's true, 'cause I've never tried to fly them again. But we're flying to Chicago and there was a layover in Detroit and we're just kids being goofy.

Playing drums with us at that time was Noel Sullivan (Gazpacho, Annihilation Time, Lecherous Gaze), and we're talking about of all things: farts. And one of us, maybe Noel, farted and it was pretty smelly, and he said something about a hostile takeover. Keep in mind, 9/11 hadn't even happened. Who knows how differently it would have gone down. But we basically got targeted by some self-righteous motherfucker saying we couldn't be saying stuff like that on a plane. And we were just talking about flatulence. He seemed to be pretty proud of himself for kicking off some nineteen-year-old kids because we were talking about farting and laughing. And something like this happened this week. Where a group of black ladies were kicked out of a restaurant 'cause they were laughing too loud.

Juan: It was a train. Someone walked up to them and told them that the train was not a bar. But the train sold alcohol. And they were just having a good time and laughing and they got escorted off the train by police.

Félix: I just wonder about how much of who they were, and what the context was, had to do with how they were treated. And that's exactly how I feel about that event with us on the plane. There's five us on the plane from L.A., laughing, probably got on their nerves. We said something that they could exploit to get us kicked off and they did. Next thing we know, all these cop cars are pulling up outside of the plane and they come in and take us off. And then we were stranded. They're like, "You can't fly N.W.A." [laughs] Which is funny. "You can't fly Northwest Airlines." Because of who knows what? That's an example of how your worldview changes. We're kids from L.A., speak differently, look different, kinda punk.

Daryl: You're just excited to be doing something cool.

Félix: Exactly, things like that. Is it because of the way we carry ourselves? Or do they think that we're someone that they can push around? 'Cause our names aren't Brad Smith, and we're not from Irvine. It was a time of a lot of political identity turmoil. "Who am I? Where do I fit in?" We're late teenagers into punk rock, we have this inclination to be critical of things around us, and it just complicates it more. We could easily just say, "Ah, fuck them." Which we did. But we could easily not think of the history and the current dynamic.

Daryl: 'Cause that shit is happening when you're not there.

Félix: Correct. And to some people, it's happening much worse. It's funny 'cause, the guys in Lifes Halt are darker-skinned than me. And now I have a bit more color 'cause I've gotten older. I look more like my dad. But when I was younger, I was much more light-skinned. I had light hair.

Juan: Wasn't it almost reddish?

Félix: Yeah, it was reddish. I never identified as white. And I don't identify as white. But it gets complicated—many years after and especially in Seattle with where I'm at and what I do and how I might express myself—people have just assumed that I am white. Because they've never heard me speak Spanish, to them I don't seem like I might be Latino. That threw me for a loop.

Daryl: So does this bring us to 2003, where you seem to stop what you had been doing for the last decade or so? Because there was big change in your involvement in the hardcore punk community.

Félix: Yeah, and that's because I was going to be a father. And that doesn't mean that people haven't had a family and continued to be active in music; I just didn't feel like I had any energy or passion for it anymore. I didn't have the excitement for playing music, or going to see bands. And I got really excited about this idea that I was going to have a child. And I love my daughters to death, I have two of them now. That's why I kinda stopped going to shows. There was even some time before that where the gas was running pretty low in that regard.

Daryl: You were going pretty hard for quite a while.

Félix: I probably wanted to play different music, too. I like music. Period. Wanted to try some different things.

Daryl: Why did you leave Los Angeles?

Félix: My girlfriend-later-wife-later-not had family in Seattle. I was going to be with her and my daughter, and she wanted to be with her family. So it seemed like a perfect opportunity to make a big change.

Daryl: And you finished up some degree up there in Library Sciences or something?

Félix: The whole time down here, I was trying to go to college. And I wouldn't complete anything because there was a divided attention with music and touring and going out to shows and not being a dedicated student.

Up there I finished up an Associates in Bilingual/Bicultural Education. And I was gonna go for a Bachelors, which I'm probably pretty close to, but I didn't complete it. I had another child, and I thought, "I'm already working, I'm already in this thing. I'm just gonna keep going." But most recently I went back to college for technical writing and got a Technical Writing Certificate. So I work at the library, but I'm not a librarian. I manage a volunteer computer instruction program offered at libraries as a free service.

Daryl: So now you're up in Seattle. You have the library job. The children. And you start to get a new band going. How did you make the decision to get back into that?

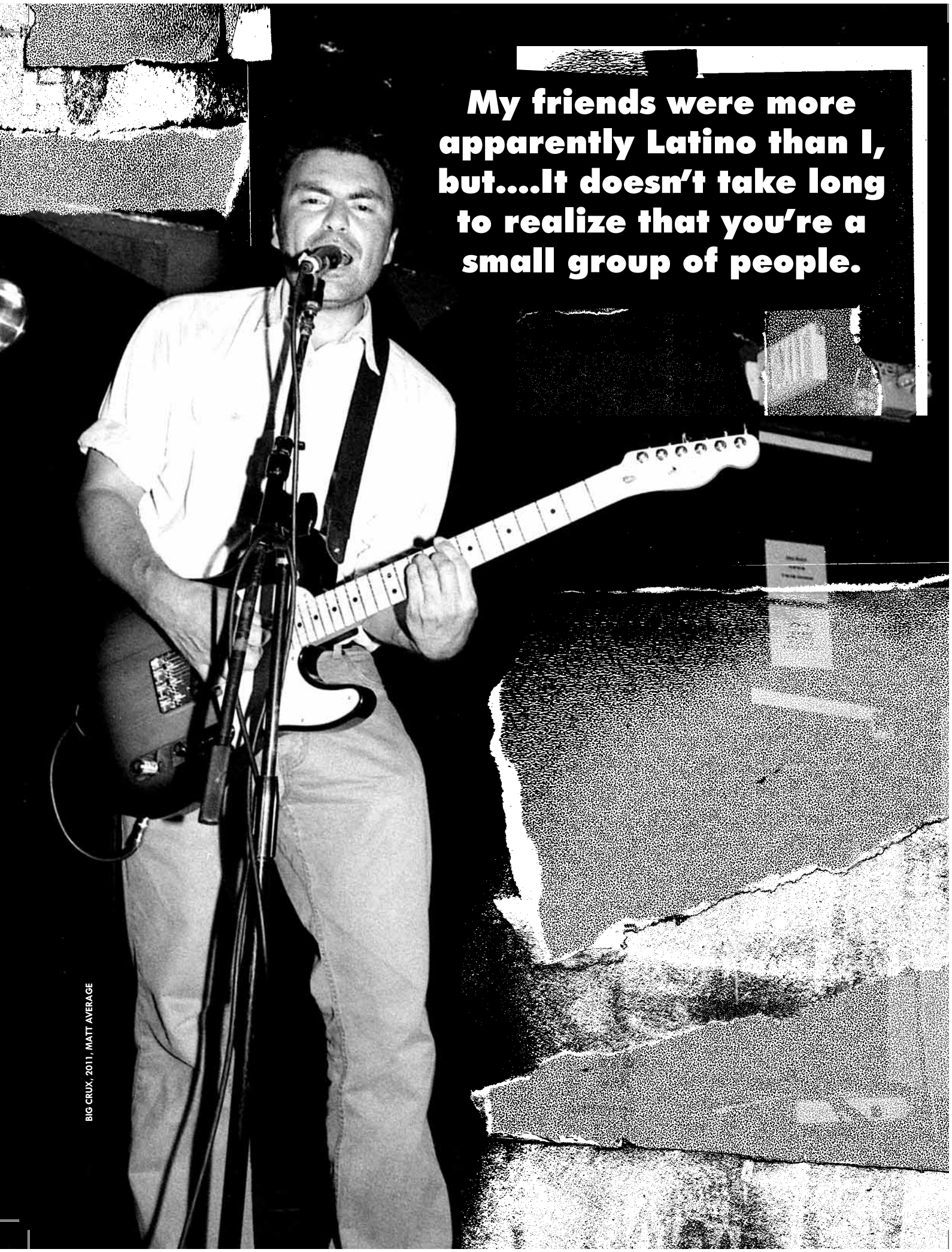
Félix: It hit me around 2009—I didn't have any instruments. I still had my records, for the most part. I bought a bass and I wanted play again. So I started to write stuff on the bass. And it was fun, and I wished I could jam with someone. I wasn't really going to shows. I knew some people, but not many. I just really wanted a guitar player to play to these bass lines. There was a guitar there, so I picked it up, and wrote some stuff! And much like how I came upon playing the guitar, same thing with the singing. Who am I gonna get to sing? I had some melodies in my head, so I tried that. And then I took the next step, which was to try and find people who would be in the band with me. I put ads up on the Northwesthardcore.com message board and people laughed at me. [laughs] They fucking laughed at me.

Daryl: Doesn't really seem like the best spot.

Félix: Nope. But I put on there that I'm really into skate punk, and punk rock, and old style punk rock, and I've got some ideas for something that's kind of along the lines of the Minutemen and Big Boys, so I'm looking for someone who has a cool, gritty bass sound, but can bring some….

Daryl: Funk?

Félix: [laughs] Maybe I did say funk, which might have been a mistake. Because people immediately have the most negative connotations about it, but I love funk music. People made fun of me. Somebody quoted



BIG CRUX, 2011, MATT AVERAGE

me and was like, "That sounds like the worst idea ever." [laughs] I had a hard time finding people until I heard from Daryl Johnson in Vancouver, British Columbia. He was into it. And I think it's because I listed bands like Minutemen, Big Boys, and Saccharine Trust. Bands that were hardcore punk, but didn't sound like anyone else. And that was my whole idea.

Daryl: Also, there's nothing really macho about the bands that you just listed.

Félix: By all means no. They were strong, powerful bands, but not in the macho sense. So Daryl was into it, and loves those bands as much as I do. We wanted to do something fun, danceable, had some guts to it, and the unofficial rule was no power chords. [laughs] And because I became a guitar player, the other rule was no guitar pedals. Like D. Boon, plug in and play your amplifier. And as creative as people do get with pedals, I just wanted a straight-up rock'n'roll sound.

Daryl: And just focus on the shredding.

Félix: Yeah, and I wanted to make the music powerful through the dynamism, the songwriting, and the performance. So Daryl, from Canada, became my good buddy and bandmate, and for about a year we tried to find someone to play bass. We had a few people try out; one guy stuck around long enough for us to play our first show on May Day 2010. We played with Useless Children from Australia, and Walls.

Juan: Wow.

Félix: Yeah, so it was a really cool first show. I know the guys in Walls so they hooked it up. We played well. One guy liked it so much. When he had heard that we needed a bass player, he was like, "I love your band, I want to play in your band." And he became our long-time bass player. Seamush Hammon. And with the exception of the first 7" and a couple tracks on the 12"EP (where I played bass, too), the three of us recorded all the songs that were released. Unfortunately because of circumstances in our personal lives, we could never build up the momentum to tour regularly. We did our recording in bunches. We had to record the whole LP in one weekend.

Daryl: Vancouver isn't all that close to Seattle. And it's in a totally different country.

Félix: You're absolutely right. I can't forget to say that Daryl put in a lot of work, time, and money, to come down to make it happen. But long story short, the band never really took off. We did releases and one mini-tour with Criminal Code in 2011. Played locally a little bit, but ultimately Daryl had to leave the band, and Jim had to leave the band shortly thereafter. And we hadn't yet released the LP. I really wanted to release the LP but I was sad, because I thought the band was dead. The guys on the record are gone. I tried really hard to get other people to join the band, but most people were too busy, or they would tell me that the songs are too hard. And on one hand it was like, "Thanks, but it's not that hard. I can show you how to play." I did find people, little by little.

Daryl: Did you ever have to kick anyone out 'cause they weren't good enough?

Félix: Oh no. [laughs] We did have tryouts with a couple of drummers, and in that scenario I told people that we really just needed someone who could jump in and play. Anyhow, after Jim and Daryl left the band, I had two different drummers and three different bass players. Oh! I take that back 'cause Jensen from Iron Lung played one show, but he wasn't really in the band.

Daryl: Was he just like [makes fast blastbeat noise with mouth]?

Félix: [laughs] Yeah, it was like [drums on table extremely fast]. It was pretty cool and fun. So this is all two or three years ago that this was all going on. When I put the LP out, in collaboration with Not Normal from Chicago, I thought it would be a little bit of a boost. I had a band to do live shows with for a minute, but then I lost another bass player and I just felt like I was at square one.

Daryl: Worn down?

Félix: And that's why I felt like I should just let it die. I'd have to find another bass player and learn old songs with them again. And there's never an opportunity to write, record, and tour on new stuff. Whatever. It just happens, and things do have a lifespan. And I still wanna play music, and some of those songs may still be around, but I don't know.

Daryl: On the back of your LP you tell a story of a random encounter with Sherman Alexie. Did you ever send him a copy of the LP?

Félix: [laughs] No, but that's a true story.

Daryl: I believe it.

Félix: Well, maybe it's a little embellished. [laughs]

Daryl: He's a writer, I'm sure he'll understand a little embellishment.

Félix: I should send him a copy though. Great idea, Daryl. Maybe he'll be into it.

Daryl: [as Sherman Alexie] "I'll play bass for you."

Félix: That'd be awesome!

Juan: I had only known you as a bass player. Did you always know how to play guitar?

Félix: The reason I knew a little guitar is 'cause when I was in eighth grade, my sister saw that I liked music so she put me in a couple guitar lessons. And it may have helped. [laughs] I think I've learned a lot more on my own, especially with the advent of Youtube. "Oh, I really like that song. I'm going to see if someone can teach me how to play it on Youtube."

Daryl: Yep.

Félix: I learned chords, and then I remember reading stuff about Tim Kerr and how he says he plays guitar. He takes chords and deconstructs them so he's like playing two strings of it. Which I guess is a jazz practice. So I just started experimenting with the chords. Most of the Big Crux songs are written on chords from other people's songs.

Juan: Do you identify more as a bassist or guitarist?

Félix: Now a guitarist.

Daryl: So you work at library.

Félix: Yeah.

Daryl: You read a lot.

Félix: Ehh.

Daryl: You include a lot of literary references in what you write.

Félix: Try to. Just whatever is on my mind.

Daryl: Do you ever write longer pieces? Other than what's on the back of Big Crux LP or the intro to the Criminal Code interview?

Félix: No, I don't really have anything like that. People tell me to though.

Daryl: 'Cause you do have a certain style to your writing. The words you use.

Félix: Yeah, maybe it comes from my technical writing stuff, too.

Daryl: You are certified.

Félix: I'm fucking certified, man! [laughs] I guess you have to be creative to write succinctly so that most people will understand. Part of my job is writing instruction manuals for computer learning.

Daryl: This is for people who have had very little exposure to computers.

Félix: Yeah, new to software. MS Word and stuff. What I prepare is pretty basic level. I discovered that one of my favorite authors, Kurt Vonnegut, was also a technical writer. And then he got into–

Daryl: He was a used car salesman.

Félix: He was all sorts of things. He was journalist, too. But there's one story where he was sent down to the basement to write a story about a horse that had escaped from its stall and did something out in the town. And he just thought it sucked so he turned in something that just said, "The horse jumped over the fucking fence." And that was it! [laughs] That was his protest. He knew it wasn't for him. Actually, though, Jim and I co-wrote the first part of what's on the back of LP.

Daryl: Is that why you didn't sign it with your name?

Félix: Yes and no. One, I do like the idea of the Big Crux, or Cruxy Grimace character—the mythology of this character that is Big Crux and what that means. But yeah, it was a collaborative effort. He referred to my lyrics as "philo-sci-fi" which seems like an apt name to call what I write and think about. It's never too obvious, sometimes esoteric. I'm just trying to put out these ideas that are hard to grasp in the first place. I guess I should give you an example.

With a name like Big Crux, it comes back full circle. It comes back to this idea of identity, being a bilingual, bicultural person. When I studied bilingual/bicultural education, there was a book that I read about culture and power in the classroom. And how an individual who is bilingual-bicultural, who is not of the mainstream monoculture, has these different reactions to the mainstream power structure.

How do I engage in that? Do I separate myself from my home culture and simply fall into the mainstream? Or do I become an advocate for my culture? Learn and know what the structure is and how it operates and be able to navigate that. And survive in it, while advocating for myself and my community. Or do I separate myself from the mainstream. Say fuck all that, and never

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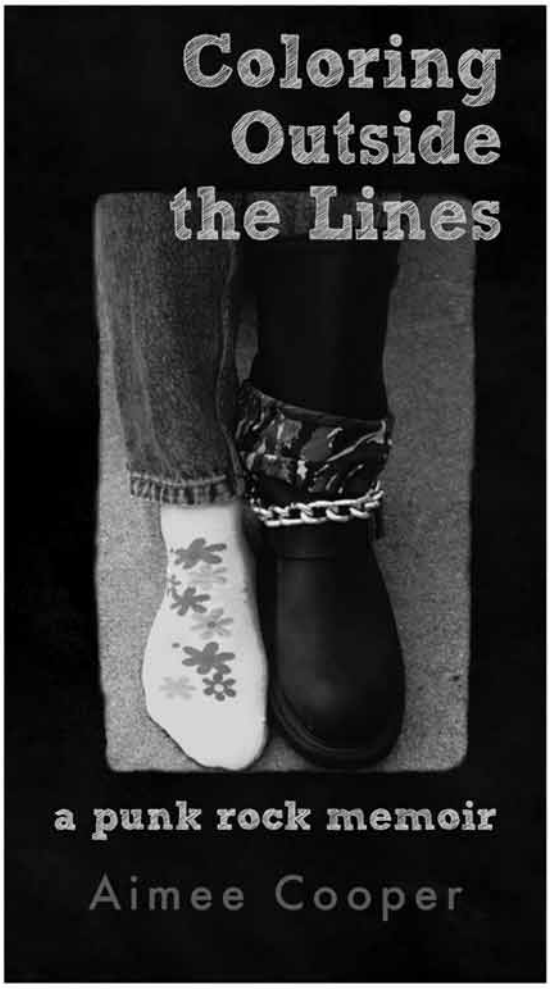

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NO REPLY, 2000, MATT AVERAGE

Teaching my girls Spanish, which is a colonial language, is part of that big crux. We carry with us the oppressed and the oppressor.

have anything to do with the large society. Big Crux has a lot of meaning to it. What's the big question? Who am I? Where did we come from? Or where are we going?

The other more light-hearted interpretation is how I originally thought, musically and aesthetically, the combination of Big Boys and Minutemen might work. That approach to punk music, or music in general, was a very free-spirited approach. What do you feel? What do you got, and how are you gonna bring your experience into how you play, and how you sound, and what you say. Which is almost a jazz approach. I liked that both those bands played right alongside other classic punk bands. Classic-sounding hardcore punk bands, like Black Flag or MDC.

Daryl: I feel like Big Boys have some stereotypical-sounding punk songs.

Félix: Tim Kerr was saying that after they saw the Dead Kennedys they were blown away and wanted to do stuff like that. And that's when they wrote their classic skate punk songs.

Daryl: [laughs] That's awesome.

Félix: That's when they wrote–

Juan: "Apolitical."

Félix: "Assault" or "Brickwall." Much more like that early-to-mid era Dead Kennedys.

Juan: I had a question about the song "Ponchito de Colores" by Polibio Mayorga. How did you get into stuff like psychedelic cumbia?

Félix: I can tell you exactly when I heard that tune. Christmas 2007, I was in Colombia with my daughters' mother 'cause that's where she and her family are from. They're just playing their music. And the part of the country they're from has a lot of Andean culture. So Polibio Mayorga is an Ecuadorian dude and he wrote that tune as a typical Sanjuanito style song, but in the '60s or '70s some bands did it in the psychedelic style as an honor to the town where the family is from.

And I heard it, but I was stoked 'cause I had heard a group from Colombia called Afrosound. And through my record collecting and record buying, and growing up with a lot of Latin music from my own family. I would always look at Latin records and check stuff out. But that band Afrosound did a cover of another song called "La Danza de los Mirlos." " Have you heard that one?

Juan: No.

Félix: Similar to "Ponchito," but just dope. Very twangy and psychedelic. But with that vicious cumbia backbeat. I was stoked 'cause Afrosound performs both of them. The song is so cool, but I had never heard it. I tracked it down, got it for myself, and dug it. And like how I told you I've mostly learned guitar by listening to stuff I like and figuring it out, I did the same thing with that. And I thought it would be cool to put it on the record. It ties in very much with this vague idea I've given you about Big Crux.

Daryl: And you did name the record after the song.

Félix: Right, *Ponchito*. It comes from the idea that people are a confluence of interests

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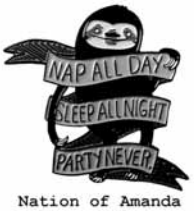
Aimee Pijpers, Alex Barrett, Alex Krokus, Andy Warner, Andra Passen, Autumn Ballard, Ben Passmore, Ben Snakepit, Brad Dwyer, Carolina Porras, Chris Mindtree, Emily Timm, Erin K Wilson, Evan Wolff, Jim Kettner, James the Stanton, Josh PM Frees, Joshum, Kriss Stress, Lindsay Anne Watson, Liz Prince, Liz Suburbia, Meg Has Issues, Mel, Nomi Kane, Rachel Dukes, Rick V., Rob Cureton, Sam Grinberg, Sarah Graley, Shannon Knox, Steve Larder, Steve Thueson, Will Laren & Wyeth Yates

Two-Inch Enamel Pins:



Nation of Amanda

Andy Warner

More New Art Stuff:

Meg Has Issues

Ben Passmore

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DARYL

and cultural traditions, and that's what "Ponchito" to me represented in my personal context as a Latino person. Ponchito de colores, literally means a colorful shawl—a colorful poncho that a person might embroider with their history. Harriet Tubman did quilts to show people the underground railroad. Similarly, Andean peoples weave their history into their clothing and fabrics. To me it seemed that *Ponchito* (the record) was my attempt at that. I don't know how successful it was, but at least it was the idea that it would embody a lot of these different influences coming into the band via me or the other guys.

Daryl: And that's the album art. A colorful poncho with woven images. While being a spoof on *Sketches of Spain*.

Félix: It's a spoof on *Sketches of Spain,* and the little subversive side of me was originally going to turn the color scheme upside down because it's the Spanish flag. Downplaying the Spanish influence and saying: there's more than just Spanish here. There's indigenous influence, there's black influence, there's Asian influence. Not on the record per se, but there's Asian influence in Latin America. There are all sorts of cultural traditions that stem from native and African diasporas. So that was the idea, but then ultimately I was just like, "Ah, I think I'm just gonna keep it this way." [laughs] And I included some little figures from a shirt I bought a long time ago at a pow wow here in L.A. I wanted to include something that represented an indigenous expression. And what I like about them, other than their origin, is that they look kind of extraterrestrial. It added an otherworldliness to it.

Daryl: Why do you think that punk shows are an anti-social activity?

Félix: Did I say that? [laughs]

Daryl: Yeah.

Félix: I don't know, maybe I've become anti-social. Maybe I was just coming off a handful of negative experiences. You go to a show thinking you're going to appreciate the music, and hang out and talk to people, but often times you don't end up talking too much. Perhaps I don't really have an outlet for talking to other people besides at a punk show, and when it doesn't happen, it all just kinda feels like, "Ah, this is so anti-social."

Daryl: And when you are talking it's over loud music and you're just screaming in each other's ears.

Félix: It is a social event, but in my mind, my definition was different. The type of event that actually takes place is the socialization of sizing each other up. How punk are you? [laughs] Do you have that cool new button? [laughs] Honestly, you see me right now. If I go to a punk show up there, and people don't know me, or don't see me talking to someone they know who vouches for me, they're like, "Who let dad in?" [laughs] And I am a dad! [laughs]

Daryl: What do your daughters think of punk? Do you expose them to it? Do they have any favorites?

Félix: Totally, they'll be cute and nice, and be like, "My favorite band is Big Crux." [laughs] They're older now. They can develop their own opinions on what they hear. I can't think of any real favorites, though.

Daryl: Crossed Out.

Félix: [laughs] I have not played Crossed Out for them. I have not played them a lot of extreme music. I play them more pop-oriented punk.

Daryl: Buzzcocks.

Félix: Yeah, Buzzcocks, or X. I played them Criminal Code.

Daryl: And they know Taiga (singer/guitarist for Criminal Code).

Félix: Yeah, and I told them it was Taiga singing. And they were like, "He sounds mad." [laughs] "Yeah, he might be." But I guess mainly with them, I listen to a lot of the family records. Old salsa records, old cumbia records, the folkloric music, because I like it and I'm trying to give them that knowledge and culture.

Daryl: They're definitely not going to get it from television or anywhere else.

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Félix: They're not. I want to make sure I give them the experience and foundation from which they can feel empowered and confident of who they are, and where they come from. As well as know that they are bilingual-bicultural children. When I say that I mean they speak Spanish at home, and when they go out into the big world at jobs and in school, they're largely going to be speaking English and carrying on those values and worldviews—but they'll know that if something is not right, they can advocate for what is right. If someone tells them at school not to speak Spanish they know to question that, 'cause it does help their education. And it's part of their cultural identity. That's an example I'm pulling out of the air, but it's also an example of things that happened in L.A. in the '90s and probably through out the country.

Daryl: And is still happening.

Félix: Things that I may have experienced, lived, witnessed—and it does come out through my subconscious with my girls. Teaching them Spanish, which is a colonial language, too, it is part of that big crux. We carry with us the oppressed and the oppressor.

And to get even deeper than that, is that just human nature? Throughout history we see that—groups taking over other groups, killing for resources and being on top. To put it on a functioning level for them: being members of North American culture, how to operate with respect, how to respect themselves, and have themselves be respected. That's why the language, the music, the food, the culture, it's not just naturally who we are—but also I'm not trying to politicize it—but I want them to know that this is you.

Daryl: So I know there are some Big Crux songs that were recorded with the last lineup, and are totally unreleased. I heard one of them and it's really good. Possibly better than anything on *Ponchito*, which as you know, I like a lot.

Félix: I do.

Daryl: What's next?

Félix: I'm not going to stop playing music, but Big Crux is dead and just needs to be left alone. I might take that music and re-record it somehow with a new project, but I frankly don't know. I'm just going to focus on learning new things. Exploring different songs and arrangements and styles. I still have my gear. I almost sold it. I was so hurt. I was like, "Screw this music shit." I'm going to try to do something that is a different voice; I'm trying to contribute something to a music scene. I'm not by any means trying to win the popularity contest. I'm just trying to do something that people appreciate.

So what's next for me? I'm gonna keep playing. If I play by myself, that's fine. If I meet people that I can hit it off with musically and do that, that'd be cool. I thought at one point that I'd love to add a heavier Latin influence to it. More percussion and horns or something. Different rhythms that aren't punk rhythms—"Ponchito" was an attempt at that. I like Manu Chao or Mano Negra. Latin-tinged rock band with a punk edge to them. When Manu Chao plays live, it's fast. I dig that stuff, and I'd like to do something that's in that line. But it's all up in the air right now.

Juan: I think you should call your next band Cholo Sin Barrio (gangster without a 'hood). [laughs]

Félix: Cholo Sin Barrio, I like that. That can definitely be a song title or something.

WATT AND FELIX, 2015

1998, MATT AVERAGE

TOP FIVES
RAZORCAKE

Alex Barrett
• *Copra: Round Three* by Michel Fiffe (book)
• Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
• Teenage Bottlerocket, *Tales from Wyoming*
• Destruction Unit, *Negative Feedback Resistor*
• Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*

Art Ettinger
• The Max Levine Ensemble, *Backlash, Baby* LP
• Wet Nurse, *So It Goes* LP
• Leftöver Crack, *Constructs of the State* LP
• White Murder, *Form Early* LP
• Legion 76, Self-titled 7"

Becky Rodriquez
1. "Eastside Punx," my first solo photo exhibition at Espacio 1839 in East L.A.
2. The Mummies, Our Band Sucks, Thee Cormans, The Jinxes, and Satan's Cheerleaders at Pickwick Gardens, Burbank 11/23/15
3. Rediscovering *Replicas* by Gary Numan And The Tubeway Army
4. Sleeping late
5. Touring the Los Angeles Natural History Museum Research Library

Bill Pinkel
• Basement Benders, *Lydiad*
• Spraynard, *Mable*
• Leatherface, *Razorblades and Aspirin* box set (RIP Dickie)
• That Captain Sensible "Christmas Catalogue" song. New wave Xmas, FTW.
• Tiltwheel playing *Hair Brained Scheme Addicts* in its entirety at VLHS.

Billy Kostka
• La Misma, *Kanizadi*
• Fried Egg, *The Incredible Flexible Egg*
• The Bug, *What's Bugging You*
• Rik And The Pigs, *Pig Sweat / Feed the Animal*
• Erik Nervous, *Shipshewana Swimming*

Camylle Reynolds
Top 5 Punk Highlights of 2015
1. Learning how to play the bass (and not just fucking around) and joining Midnite Snaxxx.
2. Neighborhood Brats getting back together.
3. Playing a Razorcake Residency show at Pehrspace with Mike Watt and Bombón.
4. Catching Badlands in Oakland. Blown. Away.
5. G.L.O.S.S. with No Statik at the Metro. One of *thee* most incredible shows. Ever. On a Monday night no less.

Candice Tobin
1. White Murder, *Form Early*
2. Red Dons, *The Dead Hand of Tradition*
3. Martha, *Courting Strong*
4. GDP, *Realistic Expectations*
5. Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*

Chad Williams
1. Baroness, *Purple* LP
2. Coma Club, Self-titled 7"
3. War On Women, Self-titled LP
4. Saviours, *Palace of Vision* LP
5. Pity, *The Struggle II* 7"

Chris Mason
1. Night Birds, Piss Test, Andy Place And The Coolheads, Public Eye, live at Blackwater, Portland, OR
2. Violent Reaction, *Marching On* LP
3. Protomartyr, *The Agent Intellect* LP
4. Diät, *Positive Energy* LP
5. Wimps, *Suitecase* LP

Chris Terry
1. Blobs, demo CS
2. Beach Slang LP and live
3. Nickelus F., *Triflin'* LP
4. *All American Boys*, by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely (novel)
5. Finished compiling the discography of my high school band, Flesh Eating Creeps

Craven Rock
1. The rock legacy of Dickie Hammond and "Philthy Animal" Taylor, R.I.P.
2. My trip to Vancouver, its punk scene, and all the rock I saw there: Poor Form, S.B.D.C., Cloaca, Shellshag, Legs, VHS, Aletheia, Infantile Dissention
3. *So You've Been Publicly Shamed* by Jon Ronson (book)
4. Tau Cross, Self-titled
5. Fleeta Partee, *LifeMuzik Deux*

Daryl Gussin
• Martha, *Courting Strong* LP
• White Murder, *Form Early* LP
• Cold World, live
• Strafplanet 7", tie with Patsy 7", tie with Rough Kids Xmas flexi, tie with getting a new fridge
• Frankie Stubbs, "My Heart is Home" (piano/violin version) b/w not being so goddamn drunk all the time.

David Ensminger
Top 5 Songs Sung By Randy "Biscuit" Turner of Big Boys to Celebrate 10 Years Since His Death
• "Frat Cars"
• "Red/Green"
• "Baby Let's Play God"
• "Fun Fun Fun"
• "History"

Designated Dale
Top 5 Rickyisms from Trailer Park Boys
1. Sarsaparilla (Salmonella)
2. Indianapolis Jones (Indiana Jones)
3. Refuckulate (Recalculate)
4. Rocket appliances (Rocket science)
5. Mating name (Maiden name)

Eric Baskauskas
Top 5 Razorcake Top 5s of 2015
• Andy Garcia, #84
• Billy Kostka, #88
• Juan Espinosa, #85
• Replay Dave, #86
• Cassie Sneider, #84

Gabie Gonzalez
• Spokenest
• Lee Noble
• Kitty Empire
• Absurd Walls
• The Warmers

Jeff Proctor
Top 5 Shows of 2015
1. Treasure Fleet *Sun Machine* record release party. February 20 at Non Plus Ultra, Los Angeles. With the Audacity, Lenguas Largas, Underground Railroad To Candyland
2. Flipper (with David Yow), Savage Republic. October 23 at the Troubadour, West Hollywood
3. Television, July 2 at the Teragram Ballroom, Los Angeles
4. Shellac, July 15 at the Regent, Los Angeles
5. Flamin' Groovies, the Zeros. November 28 at the Bootleg Theatre, Los Angeles

Jimmy Alvarado
• Mummies, Our Band Sucks, Thee Cormans, Satan's Cheerleaders and The Jinxes, live at Pickwick Gardens 10/23/15: Great night, great bands, great fun.
• Youth Brigade, *1981 Demos* 7" EP: Even better than the *Possible* EP, if I may be so bold.
• Damned, *Machine Gun Etiquette* LP: Was part of a recent vinyl rip session and I'd totally forgotten how good it is.
• *All Ages: The Rise and Fall of Portland Punk*, book by Mark Sten: Still readin' it, but so far it's a bang-up tome on one of the West Coast's most criminally overlooked scenes.
• Five-day Portland vacation: In addition to seeing the sights with my wife/best friend, the homeboy who runs Dirtnap Records was kind enough to play for me three upcoming releases from the Denton Music Mafia responsible for the Marked Men, Radioactivity, et al. Suffice to say, they're definitely gonna be worth checking out.

Joe Dana
Top 5 Records of 2015 That I Remember
1. Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*
2. G.L.O.S.S., Demo
3. Kendrick Lamar, *To Pimp a Butterfly*
4. Jew Cocks, *Full Release* (Best album released on a condom wrapper *ever*)
5. Bad Cop/Bad Cop, *Not Sorry*

Teaching a Girl Scout troop how to play pinball and giving them merit badges

John Miskelly

Five Good Things from 2015
• Tenement, *Predatory Headlights*
• Bangers, *Bird*
• #PigGate (just look it up)
• *Peep Show* (RIP)
• Jeremy Corbyn

John Mule

My Best of 2015
1. Deadly Vipers, *Cataclysmic Events*
2. *Bitch Planet* (Image Comics)
3. Badlands, *Dark Dreams*
4. G.L.O.S.S., Demo
5. Mommy Long Legs, *Life Rips*

Juan Espinosa

• Uranium Club, *Human Exploration* 12"
• CCTV 7", tie with Coneheads LP
• Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach* LP
• Flesh World and Vial, live at East 7th
• Dry Insides CS, tie with Condition, *Prelude to Hell* CS

Kayla Greet

• Beach Slang, Divers, Dyke Drama at Flop House, Olympia
• Radioactivity, Low Culture, Vapid, Bad Future, Therman Shanks at Black Lodge
• Dyke Drama, *Tender Resignation*
• Night Birds, The Loss, VHS, Listen Lady, Wolfgang Fuck at Black Lodge
• Teaching a Girl Scout troop how to play pinball and giving them merit badges

Kevin Dunn

1. Hands Up Who Wants to Die, *Buffalo, Buffalo, Buffalo* CD
2. Betunizer, *Enciende Tu Lomo* CD
3. NO///sé, *Lower Birth* LP
4. VVhile, *More* LP
5. Wet Nurse, *So It Goes* LP

Kiyoshi Nakazawa

Illegal Comics Drawing Techniques
1. Bristol Humping
2. Ink Doping
3. Synthetic Sable Pubic Hair Tweezing
4. Double-Sided Pencil Sharpening
5. Two in the Ink One in the Stink

Kurt Morris

1. Vigilantes Of Love, *V. O. L.*
2. Coliseum, *Sister Faith*
3. See Through Dresses, *End of Days* EP
4. Sigur Rós (everything)
5. Jay Reatard, *Blood Visions*

Louis Jacinto

My Top 5 Punk Photographers
1. Dawn Wirth
2. Ruby Ray
3. Theresa Kereakes
4. Diane Gamboa
5. Paul Zone

Madeline

1. The Briefs, Generacion Suicida at Alex's Bar. "Ah fuck, I think my baby is a communist."
2. Brock Osweiler leading the Denver Broncos to defeat the (then-undefeated) Patriots 30-24 in O/T.
3. Shellshag in the backyard of Int'l House of Punkcakes in Los Angeles.
4. Beach Slang, Worriers at the Bootleg Theatre.
5. Lysol Gang, New Way On, Bombpops, Western Settings, Gentlemen Prefer Blood at All Star Lanes.

Matt Average

• Heat Dust, Self-titled LP
• Amarok, live at the Prospector in Long Beach
• Cloven, live at the Prospector in Long Beach
• Mike Watt & The Missingmen, live at Cafe NELA
• Mülltüte, Self-titled LP

Matt Seward

5. Raging Nathans and City Mouse, live
4. Tim Kerr art shows
3. Various AmRep Artists, *The Color of Noise* Soundtrack
2. Othar Turner and Jessie Mae Hemphill on *Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood* (1982)
1. Napalm Death, Melvins, Melt Banana tickets on my wedding anniversary

Meztli Hernandez

1. Wax Idols, *American Tragic* LP
2. Myopic Books, Chicago, IL
3. Flesh World at East 7th Warehouse, 12/5/15
4. Fumigados, Self-titled EP
5. The beautiful City of Chicago, IL

Michael T. Fournier

• Carrie Brownstein, *Hunger Makes Me a Modern Girl* (book)
• Longings, Self-titled LP
• William Onyeabor, *Who Is William Onyeabor?* 3 x LP
• Protomartyr, live at Middle East Upstairs, Cambridge MA, 10/13/2015
• Soccer Team, *Real Lessons in Cynicism* LP

Mick Dale

Favorite Releases of 2015
• Hate Your Friends, *Quit Your Job*
• Rei Clone, Self-titled
• Upset, *'76*
• Unfun, *Waterboarding*
• Slutever, *Almost Famous*

Mike Faloon

Five Current Favs from Tenement's, Predatory Headlights
"Garden of Secrecy"
"Whispering Kids"
"You Keep Me Cool"
"Heavy Odor"
"I'm Your Super Glue"

Mike Frame

1. Whitey Morgan And The 78's, *Sonic Ranch* CD
2. Lillingtons, Queers, MTX, live
3. Lucero, *All a Man Should Do* CD
4. Dan Baird & Homemade Sin, *Get Loud* CD
5. Tom T. Hall, entire catalog

DJ Naked Rob
Radio Valencia | San Francisco

1. TV Freaks, *Bad Luck Charms* LP
2. USA Nails, *No Pleasure* LP
3. Ex-Breathers, *Past Tense* LP
4. Blacklisters, *Adult* CS
5. Gino And The Goons, *Check This Out* EP 7"

Patrick Houdek

1. Tommy Vandervort's cat Blythe Danner
2. Masked Intruder, The Copyrights, and Not Scientists at Hangar 9, Carbondale, Illinois
3. Carbondale, Illinois basement scene
4. Bad Taste at Tres Hombres, Carbondale, Illinois, playing for the SIU law school
5. Lost Cross House 30 Year Anniversary shows beginning to be planned

Paul Silver

1. Pegboy, Canadian Rifle at Liar's Club, Chicago
2. Swingin' Utters, Bombpops, Beach Slang, Success, at The Hideout, San Diego
3. Beach Slang, *The Things We Do to Find People Who Feel Like Us* LP
4. Civil War Rust, *Help Wanted* LP
5. Vacation, Pale Angels, Daylight Robbery, Carbon Leak, at Burlington Bar, Chicago

Replay Dave

• Basement Benders, *Lydiad*
• Wet Nurse, *So It Goes*
• Slayer, *Repentless*
• Beach House, *Depression Cherry*
• Loretta Lynn, *Van Lear Rose*

Rich Cocksedge

• Epic Problem, *'11 – '14* CD
• Medication Warm Places LP (last recording by Dickie Hammond, R.I.P.)
• Spraynard and Woahnows live at The Junction, Plymouth, U.K.
• Courtney Barnett, *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit* CD
• Thanks to family and friends for continuing to help me through some dark times, most notably Cath, Esme, and Rosa.

Sal Lucci

1. Suburban Homes, "Conformity in the U.K." b/w "Television Spies" 7"
2. Chrome Reverse, *Yeah Yeah, We Are...* 7"
3. Lumpy And The Dumpers / Ausmuteants, flexi 7" that came with *No Friends* #01
4. Rik And The Pigs, "Pig Sweat" b/w "Feed the Animal" 7"
5. Golden Pelicans, live. See them any and every time you can!

Sean Arenas

• All Dogs, *Kicking Every Day* LP
• Bow & Spear, *Into.* LP
• Radioactivity, *Silent Kill* LP
• Wild Moth, *Inhibitor* LP
• Radiator Hospital, *Torch Song* LP

Sean Koepenick

7" Current Heavy Rotation
1. Youth Brigade, *Complete First Demo*
2. By The Throat, *One Good Night*
3. S.O.A., *First Demo 12/29/80*
4. The Slickee Boys, *10th Anniversary* EP
5. Black Market Baby, *"Potential Suicide" b/w "America's Youth"*

Toby Tober

Top 5 Movies I Have Recently Enjoyed
1. *Bone Tomahawk*
2. *Tig*
3. *Salad Days: A Decade of Punk in Washington, DC (1980-1990)*
4. *Spring*
5. *The End of the Tour*

Todd Taylor

• Martha, *Courting Strong* LP
• Red Dons, *The Dead Hand of Tradition* LP
• Basement Benders, *Lydiad* LP tie with White Murder, *Form Early* LP
• Video, *The Entertainers* LP
• The Rival Mob, *Mob Justice* LP
• Bucky Sinister, *Black Hole* (novel)

Ty Stranglehold

Top 5 Records of 2015
1. Radioactivity, *Silent Kill*
2. Night Birds, *Mutiny at Muscle Beach*
3. Hex Dispensers, *III*
4. Maniac, *Demimonde*
5. Underground Railroad To Candyland, *The People Are Home*

RECORD REVIEWS

15
15
15
Does this mean that Knight is a classy guy and will take you out to eat after a night of sheet sports? The world wants to know! Or maybe just me.
–Sal Lucci
COSMIC PSYCHOS, Cum the Raw Prawn LP

ABORTTI 13: *Punkit Ei Kuole:* CS
I'm not really sure about the chronology of Abortti 13. Their first documentation is their classic 1984 split with Pyhäkoulu (which seems to be climbing in price as the current wave of KBD hoarders learn of its existence after running through the other classic Finnish releases by Terveet Kädet and Lama), but then there were no records until 2009—though I managed to find a reference to a bootleg tape that collects those "lost years." This tape is a retrospective of some songs I know (all their tracks from that split are on here) and a lot I don't know, so maybe they're intending to close the gap with this release. The songs were re-recorded this year, which bummed me out at first. I was found to be mistaken though, as these songs sound great. I'm not quite sure how they managed to make this sound so fresh and new after all these years, but I honestly think this is some of the best material this band has churned out. The production is heavy and has more bite to it than their last LP, but is just as urgent and retains a classic Finnish punk sound. Sadly, this was limited to one hundred copies and looks as if it was only released in Finland, but maybe there will be a vinyl pressing in the future. –Ian Wise (Self-released, abortti13.bandcamp.com)

ABSOLUT / PARANOID: *Jawbreaking Mangel Devestation:* Split: 12" EP
Absolut from Toronto take no prisoners with a four-song d-beat assault. The Far East is most noticeably the source of their inspiration, as I'm detecting hints of Burning Spirit hardcore and G.I.S.M.-esque metal influence and guitar leads—fierce-as-fuck, as you may have guessed. Paranoid from Sweden's delivery is slightly rawer than Absolut's but just as pulverizing, if not more. Buzzing guitars, apocalyptic drum bashing, and manic vocal howling will surely rip posers to shreds. Highly recommended for fans of Aghast, Impalers, Desperat, See You In Hell, and everything in between. –Juan Espinosa (Beach Impediment / Brain Solvent Propaganda)

ALL DOGS: *Kicking Every Day:* LP
All Dogs, from Columbus, OH, emit chill vibes and unfiltered heartache that appeals to fans of P.S. Eliot and Acid Fast. Singer/guitarist Maryn Jones softly croons on opener "Black Hole," which is a forecast for much of the record. Many of the songs don't so much as strike you as they seem to slowly seep under your skin. You gradually catch on to the dense melodies and poetic lyricism. When "That Kind of Girl" kicks in with its upbeat tempo (and downbeat lyrics: "I know that I am always fucking up your world"), it's a break from the dreamy, head-nodding atmosphere of the previous three songs. That's not to say that the slow jams aren't appealing—rather the driving songs, like "Flowers" and "Ophelia," make the interpersonal tragedy of "Leading Me Back to You" and "Skin" much more tragic. All Dogs are a whirlwind of emotions that I don't mind getting swept up in. –Sean Arenas (Salinas, salinasrecords.com)

ANGELIC UPSTARTS: *Bullingdon Bastards:* LP/CD
Whilst many older punk bands might never again reach the heights of their earlier material, it's heartening to hear those that can still write impactful new music. The lyrical targets for Thomas "Mensi" Mensforth haven't changed at all; the government and fascists are still within his sights. There is a fine mix of songs here, some maintaining a harder edge whilst others taking on a more melodic approach that is even a bit poppy in places. It's this variation which makes the album work so well, never allowing it to stagnate. Another plus is a guitar sound reminiscent of Stiff Little Fingers, one more reason why I know I'll be returning to *Bullingdon Bastards* on many occasions. –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

ASHLEY REAKS: *This Is Planet Grot:* CD
Ashley Reaks is a multi-faceted artist from England, with many works over the last two decades in collage, video, and music. This is his first true punk rock album, though you can clearly hear that he's been a student of British punk since the early '80s, as *This Is Planet Grot* recalls elements of Crass, (English) Subhumans, and U.K. Subs. Unique songs and a unique perspective; this is an interesting listen, though some songs tend to be a bit repetitive. –Chad Williams (Self-released, ashleyreaks.com, info@ashleyreaks.com)

AWEFUL KANAWFUL & HIS RUBBER HUSBAND'S BAND: *Brave as Hits:* CS
Don't be fooled by the corny '80s Glamour Shots photo on the cover that makes Aweful look like some sort of Christian rocker. Aweful Kanawful mines the history of American music, playing a bit of Sun Records rockabilly, a bit of sixties pop like the Grass Roots, some psychedelic rock, some Bob Dylan And The Band, some hootenanny stuff, and even some skiffle (which isn't really American Music but Britain's answer to... just forget it). He reminds me of Greil Marcus's vision of Olde Weird America played with the (perhaps intentional) slop of a Richard Hell And The Voidoids bootleg, and some Mojo Nixon thrown in for good measure. Too diverse to be garage rock, I guess you'd have to call this garage Americana. Maybe that's a stupid word, but Kanawful is takin' it back. –Craven Rock (Jelly Music, jellymusicinc.bandcamp.com)

BABY SHAKES: *"She's a Star" b/w "Gimme Your Love":* 7" EP
Keep on walkin' folks. Nothin' new to see here. Baby Shakes offers up a mawkish EP featuring childlike vocals backed by cherubic "oohs" and "aahs," tired '50s melodies, and trite lyrics. They're like a really dumbed down version of Ex Hex, if Mary Timony tragically lost her moxie and all sense of dignity. Honestly, the best moment of this EP was the instant the last chord of the last song died. RIP. –Simone Carter (Surfin' Ki, surfinkirecords.bigcartel.com / Astro Girl, astrogirlrecords.bigcartel.com)

BABY SHAKES: *Starry Eyes:* LP
Few bands are writing songs this good these days and none are better looking. I want to take this album into the bedroom and do terrible, terrible things to it. Perhaps I already have! Horizontally-striped Rock'n'Roll Girl rock'n'roll, that transcends the (admittedly not unwelcome) clichés of the art form. If I told you to quit your job, drop out of school, buy this album and run away from home, I wouldn't be that far off the mark. BEST SONG: "All The Pretty Things." BEST SONG TITLE: I dunno, do I get to make a joke about the Records song now or later? FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Packaging includes a photo of them getting their Undertones records signed by John O'Neill. THAT'S class. –Rev. Nørb (Lil' Chewy)

BAD BOYFRIENDS: *Songs Yer Mom Taught Us Demo:* CS
There's a little something for everybody here: spastic-thrash, punkabilly, fuzzed-out lo-fi with just a touch of British punk kind of deal that was probably recorded in an empty grain silo. –Jackie Rusted (Gotcha! Comix, gotchacomix.wordpress.com)

BAD MOJOS: *Punx Faggots Freaks:* 7"
Absolutely bizarre vocals highlight this instantly grabbing, Spits-inspired band from Switzerland. The singer is in the upper echelon of odd, sounding somewhere between a Muppet and a stroke victim in speech therapy. Most, but not all, of the songs are in English, with really silly lyrics presented totally humorlessly. Standing out due to the sheer craziness of the vocals, Bad Mojos is anything but bad. –Art Ettinger (No Front Teeth)

BALLOT BURNER: *Forward to Extinction:* 7"
The music is gritty, devastating, thrashin' hardcore punk that borders on "crust-as-fuck." The lyrics are thoughtfully pissed. The cover art is taken from *Les Diableries*, which according to the insert is "a series of early stereoscopic images published in Paris in the latter half of the 19th Century, depicting scenes of daily life in Hell." All in all, solid, well-rounded release. Perfect for the next time you wanna listen to something that's gonna kick your face in. –Daryl (Harvest King, harvestkingrecords.com)

BEACH PARTY: *Broken Machine:* LP
This is catchy and smart as hell. Beach Party draws on some of the best stuff that's happening in punk right now. There are the jangly guitars, the perfectly strained vocals, the dead-on harmonies… and of course there's that mid-tempo, '90s alt sensibility—so easy to get wrong but so, so good when it's right. I hear a little of each of the college rock regulars—Superchunk, Dinosaur Jr., Hüsker Dü, everyone knows the list—but it's cleaner than that, somehow still fresh and new for all its nostalgia. Actually, maybe this is even more reminiscent of the buoyant emo bands that followed that era, particularly The Promise Ring. Say what you want about the recent overabundance of "beach" bands, but Beach Party have definitely earned their spot in alphabetized record collections (especially if you're gonna be putting them next to Beach Slang). Would love

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to see this band venture down from Portland more often (*hint hint)*; this is something a lot more people ought to be hearing. –Indiana Laub (Sex Sheet, contact@sexsheetrecords.com)

BLACK ABBA: *"Betting on Death" b/w "Civilized": 7"*
Proof positive that a dopey synth riff can make a decent song out of even the most threadbare garage-punk plodder. Problem is that I don't really hear anything resembling an A-side here, just a B-side and a B-minus side. BEST SONG, BEST SONG TITLE, and FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT suspended due to lack of motivation. –Rev. Nørb (Goner)

BLACK PANTIES: *"Prophet of Hate" b/w "Violence": 7"*
Crazed, lo-fi shenanigans abound as two brutally ultra-cool garage tracks leap off of the latest slab of vinyl from scene darlings Black Panties. I'm not sure what to make of it, other than it's gritty and makes me pang for seeing them live. Slower and more sludge-laden than the majority of the garage records of today, this single is an attention-getter, that's for sure. Definitely one for the ages, this cruel little record is worth looking for. –Art Ettinger (Total Punk)

BLACK PANTIES: *Future:* 7"
Thuddy, mutoid garage punk that can suck in any positive vibes and effortlessly shit a dump truck of fecal matter on 'em. Pessimistic, morbid, and broken. With most punk records you can always retain some level of ambivalence towards lyrical content and get what you want out of the music. It doesn't seem so easy with Black Panties. If you're not on a nihilistic tear—hell bent on total annihilation—then maybe this record isn't for you. Yet, if you're feeling like everything around you is sugar-coated horseshit, and the sun just can't go down fast enough: Black Panties is waiting. –Daryl (Windian)

BLOBS: *Shame:* CS
Not to focus too heavily on their name, but I just read Josh Max's piece in the *New York Times* about becoming a nude art model ("Zen and the Art of Art Modeling"), the quiet exhilaration and anonymity of it, and the support he got from both the teacher and the students, until he saw a drawing of himself by one student, "a lanky guy wearing a fedora, a beard and a slight smirk," who had drawn "basically a blob with arms and legs." Max feels stricken that he's rendered not as "a lovable blob, a sexy blob, a confident blob," but as "a repulsive blob, a loser blob." Buffalo's Blobs have perhaps dealt with the fedora smirk in one way or another (we are all dealing with fedora smirk), and are perhaps alienated blobs, wondering-why-life-is-so-terrible blobs, Charlie Brown blobs. But they're also relatable, high energy weirdos who have made one of the best tapes I've heard in a while. Singer Amelia is just on the border between exhausted and unhinged, reaching her limit and going crazy over hyper rock'n'roll. She's not accepting calls today. The band as a whole are not wasting any time. You are dancing no matter where you are when you hear this, you cool, smart blob. –Matt Werts (More Power, morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

BONES HOWELL: Self-titled: CD single
People, this is a CD single! I'm so glad to see this thing. I used to get these all the time at the record store. If you grab a corner of the little cardboard sleeve and flick your wrist quickly, you can shoot the CD out like a rocket into the street. Bands are releasing records way too soon these days; you don't have to put out a record just because you recorded something. The punk thing to do right now would be to stop blowing your money making pressing plants rich and start making CDs again. They're cheap as hell and you can get them back immediately. The music on this release is well done, but a little too pop punk/affected America for my taste. If you like that sort of thing, it sounds good. The CD single is a shot across the bow. Well done. –Billups Allen (Bones Howell, boneshowell.bandcamp.com)

BORN LOOSE: *Blow Out:* LP
Blow Out is a speedy record that starts like a night of too much coffee, alcohol, and more alcohol. Born Loose belong in a dirty rock'n'roll dive bar, drinking, sweating, and having a good time. With song titles like "Whiskey Holiday" and "PBR on the Rocks," it's easy to see what I mean. These guys would be a good fit opening for Supersuckers or Zeke. –Ryan Nichols (Hound Gawd, info@houndgawd.com)

BOTTLENOSE KOFFINS: *Peanut Allergies:* CD
If somewhere in the bizzaro expanse of the universe The Beach Boys and Dead Kennedys joined forces, your outcome would be something like Bottlenose Koffins. They are the epitome of a party punk band. This is the Seattle surf punk band's second full length this year and they're really hitting the ground running. The band is quirky in the same vein as acts like Japanther, wherein they still demonstrate musical prowess but they're also going to give you before and after song names like "East Bay Reagan." *Peanut Allergies* is complete with a cover of the "Sealab 2021" theme song and a clip of *The Simpsons* theme thrown into one of the tracks. As soon as you hit play on this record, you'll be hit with "ooo-eee-ooo-eee-oh" surfer melodies with a lot of Dick Dale-inspired, bright guitar work. It's so pretty that you don't even notice that you've been shakin' your assets long into the daylight hours. Recommended for jumping around on your bed in your underwear. –Kayla Greet (Bomb Pop)

BOW & SPEAR: *Into.:* LP
Bow & Spear are crafting galvanizing, genre-bending music that spits in the

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–Matt Average (Razorcake)

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face of tedium. This noise is guaranteed to make you excited. It seems like these folks only recorded the most titillating bits, even though they are clearly capable of long-winded, jammy interludes. The arrangements and vocals are sometimes frantic, resembling *Bleach*-era Nirvana, with the rhythm section pummeling alongside the atonal guitar. "Doubtless" and "Blank Scene" are Drive Like Jehu-ish spasms. "Antrum," the record's six-minute centerpiece, nosedives into a dense wall of sound that cuts into an inventive riff only to build again. "Health" never lets up. My fingers ache just listening to David Ritter's noodling. Closer "Void Boy" is a blitzing pop tune that is both shimmering and serrated. *Into.* is for the jaded listener in me. It wakes me up. I love discovering bands that seamlessly blend their influences, creating something unique. Get into this. –Sean Arenas (Self-released, bowandspear.bandcamp.com)

BRUISER QUEEN: *Let's Fall in Love Again All Over - Home Demos 2010-2015:* CS
Let's Fall in Love Again All Over is a collection of Midwest garage pop band Bruiser Queen's demos. Sounds like Shannon And The Clams and Best Coast. Demos range from stark acoustic ("On the Radio" and "Some Girl's Ghost") to fully amped and backlined. The songs are sometimes subdued and bitter sweet, some just flat out rock. Best song on here is "Telepathic Mind," which is totally single-worthy. –Camylle Reynolds (Certified PR)

BUTTERSCOTCH CATHEDRAL, THE: Self-titled: LP
"Won't you come inside the Butterscotch Cathedral / You can fly." So begins a pseudo-concept album from the mind of Matt Rendon, the principle songwriter for long-standing Tucson psych band The Resonars. The Resonars have languished in the desert sun for years, amassing an arsenal of vintage equipment. The Butterscotch Cathedral is a graduation from the pop-psych of the Resonars. With heavy distortion and Hollies-inspired vocal harmonies rising from the blacktop, the album creates a haunting meringue. The album sandwiches two eighteen-minute songs around a two-minute offering called "Heavy Sun." Heavy fuzz riffs underlined by clannish drumming and ethereal vocal harmonies make a modern psych classic. –Billups Allen (Trouble In Mind)

CAGES: *Complaint and Riots We Should Leave to Cats:* CS
I have gotten really tired of long and attempting-to-be-clever titles for releases. Almost as tired as I have gotten of acts playing themselves up as something and comparing themselves to their heroes. This project is "Ethereal Noise Improvisation" and compared to Boredoms, John Cage, Neubauten, Bjork, Laurie Anderson, and the like. Nice try but boring and, at this point, standard improvisation is not the same as inspired and innovative improvisation. If you absolutely cannot get enough of the kind of art/noise/improv that is available every night of the week at any DIY venue, here is more for you. –Mike Frame (Peterwalkee)

CASUAL: Self-titled: LP
Sort of emo (mostly) punk with dorky vocals and self-deprecating lyrics is what you'll get from Casual—but with just the right amount of humor to make it palatable. They up the ante with "Opium," a song about a friend's addiction. It's really a pretty good record; I just can't get behind the overly nerdy vocals—but there are plenty of other popular bands with a similar aesthetic that prove a lot of people do. I'd steer those people in this direction. –Craven Rock (Dead Broke)

CHROME REVERSE: *"Yeah Yeah, We Are...": 7"*
First time I heard these songs I thought, "Fuck yeah, Budget Rock returns for the win!" But after a few more spins, I feel that while Chrome Reverse are rooted in '90s garage punk style (a time/place where my tastes stopped maturing, and I don't give a hoot or other four-letter words if you don't like that) it just is not Budget Rock. Chrome Reverse members have done time in The No-Talents and Splash Four, to name a few, so put those bands in your thinker when conjuring the yeah yeah sounds of Chrome Revere. Or just buy the friggin' record! –Sal Lucci (Mag Wheels, Facebook.com/Mag-Wheels-Records)

CHRON TURBINE / VIOLENT BULLSHIT: Split: 7"
Chron Turbine: This is undoubtedly the most boring "song" I've heard all year. It is literally comprised of the same riff and beat played continuously for three long minutes, with some occasional soloing. No vocals, no variation, no nothing. Violent Bullshit: Now this is a song! As in, it is an actual song that has different parts that make up a whole that is interesting to listen to. In fact, this is a killer punk song. Like one of the mid-tempo Government Warning songs. It's called "They Give You (What You Want)" and it's an apt title. I wanted a punk song, and I got it. If you're okay with buying a 7" for one song, then pick this up! –Chad Williams (Peterwalkee)

CLITBOYS, THE: *We Don't Play the Game:* EP
Excellent reissue of this classic Midwestern hardcore punk EP originally released on Feedback in 1983. Beer City has done another great job with the packaging, mimicking the original so well you think you're getting the original for a deal when you flip to it in the bins. Though this was released nearly thirty-three years ago, this still stands up and isn't really dated, especially in a scene that really looks back to the past for its sound. The Clitboys cranked out no-frills hardcore punk with soul and conviction, which keeps this sounding fresh. The delivery is a mix of mid-tempos to fast. The vocals are rapid fire and yet clear and

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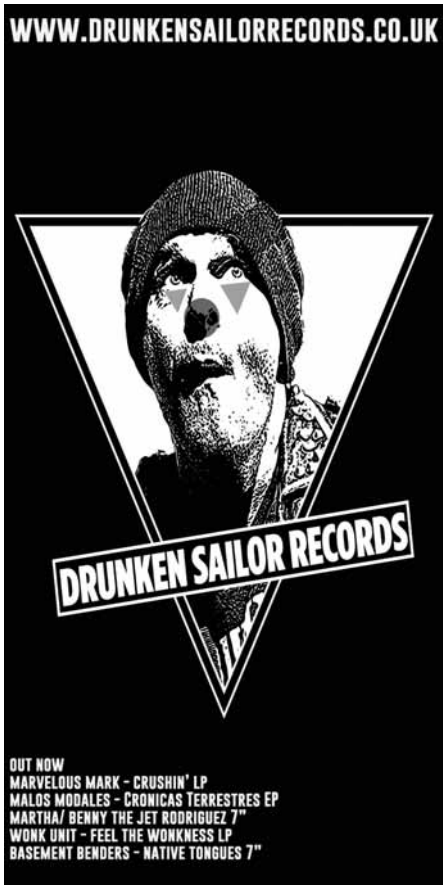
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concise, dishing out rants of teen angst and frustration, and taking a stand against homphobia ("Gay Is Okay"), which wasn't something as common back then, especially coming out of the Midwest. All of these songs are relatable in one way or another because the words are to the point and without pretense. "Sheep" and "Slogan Boy" rail against conformity, "So Funny" and "No Such Thing" are pure teenage angst, the title track is a great mantra for taking a stand, and "Have Faith" calls out religion. All of the things any thinking person, no matter their age, deals with. The no-frills playing is where a lot of the character comes in. The guitar has just that right amount of grit in the sound, and the blasts that happen in the chorus during "No Such Thing" are perfect, sounding like they're coming through an old transistor radio. The tempos are just short of going off into thrash, which keeps everything taught, intense, and memorable. Highly, highly recommended. –Matt Average (Beer City)

COBRA SKULLS: ***Live at the BBC:*** **EP**
I saw these guys play at Reggie's in Chicago a few years ago. Every one of their songs had the word "cobra" in it, which, depending on how you see things, becomes more amazing or terrible as the night continues. None of that here, though. Devin Peralta seems to have so much fun singing with his ever-so-slight folky inflection that it's hard not to get drawn in to these songs that are a bit too ripping to be given that pop stamp, but so aggressively melody-heavy that it distinguishes itself from a solid, steady-as-she-goes punk group like Blitz, whose song "New Age" they accelerate in a cover that closes out the B-side. Okay. So if you haven't heard them before, let "New Age" be your safe song and then try "Honorary Discharge under the Influence"—more good, rollicking shit. I was ready to wearily sit through a bunch of weird snake songs, but this is a great intro to the band, and for fans, it's some novelty live fun that's worth grabbing. –Jim Joyce (Gunner / Red Scare)

COSMIC PSYCHOS:
Cum the Raw Prawn: **LP**
Could this be The Cosmic Psychos' most emotionally revelatory album? There's a swear word tab sticker on the sleeve, and singer Ross Knight tells us that despite all the bad names he's called people over the years, he really loves all of humanity. In the song "Bum for Grubs," Knight sings, "There's more to me than beer and pubs...." But the Psychos, known for their unique and scatological view of the world, follow up that sentiment with, "take me home, I'll take your bum for grubs." So, does this mean that Knight is a classy guy and will take you out to eat after a night of sheet sports? Or perhaps does it mean he's into analingus? The world wants to know! Or maybe just me. I'm betting on the latter, as there is a song on side two detailing what Knight may have done to a spurned lover's toothbrush. Yes, that. I really like this album, but it's not as steamrolling as their last (*Glorius Barsteds*, which I think I like more than *Go the Hack*. Yeah, I said it). I would have sequenced the songs differently, and there are gaps between some of the songs that are too long, slowing the momentum. Album ender "Didn't Wanna Love Me" might be the catchiest tune on the record, but there is an extended solo warbly vocal after the instruments drop out which takes the joke a little too far. Still, the Psychos deliver. –Sal Lucci (Desperate)

COZY BODY: ***Mineral Girls:*** **CS**
Cozy Body play mellow post-punk tunes that are prone to slow downs and rising crescendos. Guitars and vocals are replete with echoey, hazy effects that create a sort of continuous, unhurried jam, one song melding to the next. When one song distinguishes itself from the mix, the band brings to mind Built To Spill, or any other similarly well-paced rock group that enables itself to cover more ground—the mellow, the steady, the aggressive—all because it's not in a hurry or tied to big choruses. "Was the Worst Thing That Ever Happened to Me" is a track to check out. The second time I listened to this was when I watched some friends go rat fishing in an alley using a Halloween Whopper as bait. When one side of the tape ended and I didn't flip it, people demanded it be flipped. The rats were biting, the music was playing. Easy, breezy, beautiful, *Mineral Girls*; it's the soundtrack to your alley. –Jim Joyce (Self-Aware)

CRUELSTER: ***First Demo 2006:*** **CS**
The cassette is spray painted black and, I suspect, taped over another band's tape, probably bought in a thrift store clearance bin. The cover is a photocopy of a photocopy of a hand drawing. The band's name is spelled differently on the packaging than it is on the actual tape. The music: it rules. Imagine a mashup of your favorite '80s hardcore bands: Dead Kennedys, Big Boys, Germs. The sounds are as pleasantly chaotic as the packaging. I want to put this tape in a boom box, stick it in the back of my old 1988 Honda hatchback, and drive to the skate park. –John Mule (More Power Tapes)

D.O.A.: ***Hard Rain Falling:*** **CD**
The decades-long love affair between D.O.A. and I has been... rocky. Up to *War on 45* I considered them all but untouchable, a position I still staunchly defend. After that, things get a bit problematic, first with the creeping influence of very bad '80s rock—both in sound and production—then a succession of spotty records albatrossed with an exasperating insistence on including terrible ska punk filler—and by filler I mean a half-album's worth in some cases—and a seemingly endless assortment of repackaged, reordered, and resoundingly pointless compilations, collections, and themed concoctions. Mind you, it's not that I didn't want them to grow and expand their palette, and there were definitely some interesting moments peppered in through the years, but what was coming

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out seemed more like uninspired paint-by-numbers than one of the most ferocious punk bands ever to stomp terra pushing at boundaries. Ever the optimist, I remained undeterred, picking up every release I came across in the hopes that they would come around and remember what once made them so goddamned crucial. Some glimmers of hope shone through with the *Talk-Action=0* album of a few years back, a mostly solid release, but this bad boy here is easily their most keyed in and consistent album in decades. The chutzpah, the feral swagger, and Joey's snarl are in abundance on tunes that go right for your inner "fuck yeah!" button and set you careening off the nearest wall. Lyrical subject matter is topical and right on the money without coming off as preachy or slogan-heavy, and, hell, even the cover of The Slickers' song "Johnny Too Bad" is inspired in its delivery, relying more on the hint of Caribbean rhythms than going for full-ska mode. Faboo this is, a release worthy of their good name and formidable reputation. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

DIRTY FEW / ROOTBEER AND MERMENTAU: *Set 'Em Free:* 7"
Dirty Few tread the well-worn rock territory of Electric Frankenstein with enough garage spit to perk up your ears and enough singalong crecendo to concrete their tunes in your psyche. Rootbeer And Mermentau deliver similar rock bounce with a bit more NY-distorted snottiness. If you ever find yourself in a conversation with a music fan prattling on about the grittiness of the Strokes or White Stripes, break this 7" in half and stab them with the jagged edge to show them what the rock is all about. Gray/ blue marble wax. –Matt Seward (Snappy Little Numbers, snappylittlenumbers.blogspot.com)

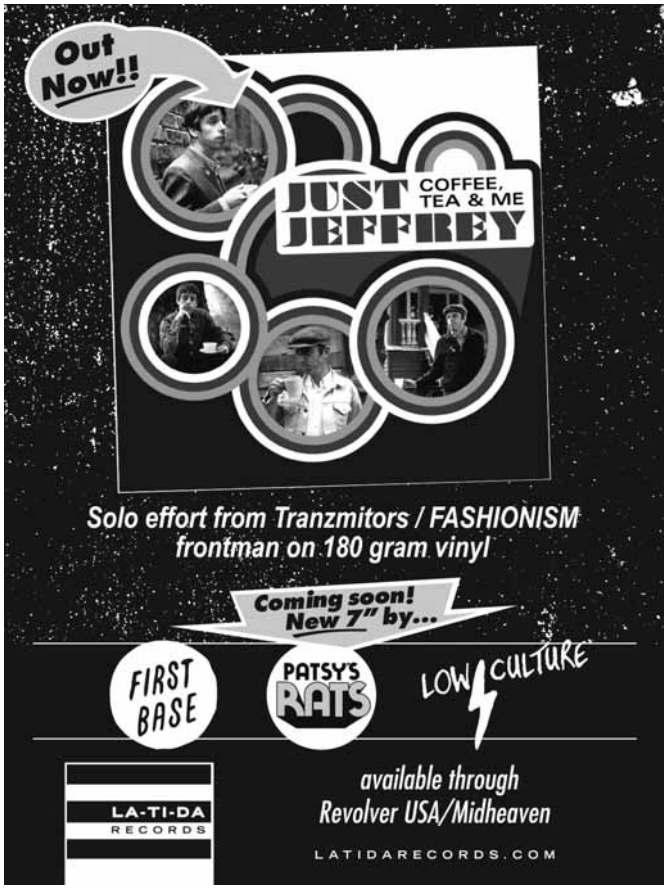
DISCO LEPERS: *Open Sores:* 7"
Not sore about *Open Sores*! This is the first time I've heard from Disco Lepers, though they've been a band for over a decade, and I'm pleasantly surprised. The band members have cheeky disease names like Chrissy Coli and are running rampant with the malady theme. The EP features three quick-fire punk ditties with gritty guitar, blown-out vocals, piercing sharp solos, and a rhythm section that'll give you a rumbly in your tumbly. They're "blow your nose" rock in the sense that they're snotty and fast. I can't help but compare them to The Cute Lepers even though they only share the one word in their names. But like The Briefs offshoot, these guys come packed full of energy and sharp, powerful leads. Only thing that makes me sick about this release is that I didn't know about them sooner. –Kayla Greet (No Front Teeth)

DON HOWLAND: *Life Is a Nightmare:* LP
Don Howland, he hates the bass. He hates the bass and he's willing to name his LP something so overwrought that any bummed thirteen-year-old could get behind it, and he's recorded a handful of songs over four years that take some of the bright and trebly piecemeal work of folks like The Motards, Hasil Adkins, and the Murder City Devils—and manages to make it his own. The first track, I shit you not, is something that wouldn't have been terribly out of place on *Raw Power*. Or at least something written by dudes wanting to write *Raw Power* a year or two after *Raw Power* came out, if that makes sense. I mean, *Nightmare* is more sparse than it is ferocious—instrumentally speaking—and at times the tinny quality and medium tempos make it seem like this thing is just resolutely plodding along, but there are still some lo-fi garage gems buried here. Just wish the guy didn't hate the bass so much. –Keith Rosson (12XU)

DUDES: *Ultra Vague:* CS
Pretty sure More Power Tapes stealthily crept into my bedroom and stole a tape from my demo collection. In 1988. And held out on releasing it until 2015. Dudes are the mashup of punk, metal, and dirt rawk that ruled skate ramps and venues/ "sports bars" of the late-'80s. Atonal barking over equal parts speed and groove with complete disregard to blending in solos or silly swinging jazz breakdowns. Hilarious, greasy fun, and recommended. –Matt Seward (More Power Tapes, morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

ELSINORES, THE: *New Forms:* LP
After an intro that seems to go on forever (I was tempted to just pick the needle up and forego the whole thing out of annoyance) this album finally starts. I kind of wish it hadn't. This is one of those situations where I'm desperately trying to find something positive to say about a record and finding nothing. This is basically demo-quality "post-punk" with sharp inflections of the Cure and Smiths-y phrasing that I really want to like but sounds boring as hell. The vocals remind me so much of late-'90s alternative rock that it distracts from anything I may find appealing about this. I'm sure I'm supposed to come up with a bunch of more obscure references, but I'm not going to because that would just be splitting hairs. Some of the songs ("Generation") are sort of verging on something good, but are lost in muddy structures and uninspired vocal melodies that sear over the top. –Ian Wise (Dead Tank)

EPIC PROBLEM / HOLIDAY: Split: 7"
Two songs from each of these superb British bands are showcased on this worthy split 7". Both bands sound similar and remind me of Reducers SF or Swingin' Utters, with a dash of Leatherface thrown in for good measure. There's an unfair tendency to write off slick, melodic streetpunk recordings as "overproduced," but this record presents catchy, singalong punk at its finest. The U.K. accents are light, and the melodies are tight. Neither band is especially new, so their fans are presumably lining up for this release. You should be, too. –Art Ettinger (Brassneck, brassneckrecords.bigcartel.com)



EPIC PROBLEM: *'11 – '14:* CD
Some releases are a joy to review and this compilation is one of them, as I already possess all but two of the featured seventeen tracks. This CD brings together all of the songs that the band—which includes former Blitz bassist Mackie on guitar—recorded during the first four years of its existence. It's good to have them all compiled together. With a punchy melodic punk quality along the lines of The Great St. Louis and a penchant for Rancid-like basslines, Epic Problem has already amassed a fine body of work in a short time. There are countless hooks and riffs which only took a few listens to take root in my head. This album is an inexpensive way of catching up on some excellent tunes. –Rich Cocksedge (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com / Pumpkin, pumpkinrecords.co.uk / Savage Amusement, savageoi.com)

ESE: *All In:* CD
High octane punk rock, with an emphasis on the "rock," straight outta Tejas. No heavy political commentary or unrelentingly dour lyrical content, just hard-driving and pummeling from beginning to end, culminating in a medley of Texas Tornados' "Guacamole" and "Who Were You Thinking Of?" and the promise of live sets that must be something to see. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

ESE: *All In:* CD
These dudes must love Zeke. "Drink, fuck, and fight" style, fast-and-furious punk rock'n'roll from Texas. Zeke, The Dwarves, and a hundred other bands have covered this territory before, and Ese doesn't really offer anything unique—except of course "Guacamole (Texas Tornados)." It's about damn time the king of dips got its due in a rock'n'roll song. Is that what caught Joey Shithead's attention? I don't know, but it's no joke. Guacamole? I'm all in! –Chad Williams (Sudden Death)

EX-OPTIMISTS, THE: *Phantom Freight:* LP
I don't know if the band planned it this way, but the first seven or so minutes of the first side of this LP sound like an audio interpretation of the cover art, like the listener is being submerged into an intense-sounding '70s science fiction movie in a futuristic world. Once the song *really* gets going though, it seamlessly bursts into a swirl of guitar like the best Swervedriver-influenced noisy indie rock song you've ever heard. Taking up the entire A-side, I was shocked to see how fast fifteen minutes had passed and I already needed to flip the record. The B-side has shorter, more traditional offerings that can hold their own with any other guitar-centric indie rock going on right now. After opening with a slightly twangy song reminiscent of something from Athens, Ga. in the '80s, there are even more songs that mix the swooping, catchy, and fuzzed-out guitar lines of the abovementioned Swervedriver with the songwriting of Hüsker Dü, as well as a couple other '90s-influenced alternative rock gems and a true-to-form cover song from a perennial '90s favorite. I can really hear the Bob Mould influence in a song like "Whoop Stop," one of the many favorites of mine on the record. But truthfully, it's impossible to even select favorite songs on a record when you really like them all. *Phantom Freight* is a great record from start to finish, doing its part to bring back the loud, hooky guitars that were prevalent in '90s indie scene partnered with overall great songwriting—something that is often missing from the arsenal of many contemporary indie rock bands. This LP receives my highest recommendation, as I really cannot stop listening to it. –Mark Twistworthy (Sinkhole Texas, sinkholetexas.bandcamp.com)

FACTION, THE: *Pegged for Live 1985:* LP
It's Alive. No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith. Evilive. These are essential live albums. *Liveage. Night of The Living Dead Boys. Gig.* These are interesting live albums. *Pegged for Live 1985* fits into neither of these categories, unfortunately. However, it is an interesting artifact of the time and worthy of preservation. If you used to have this originally cassette-only release and loved it back then, you're gonna want to pick this up. If The Faction, Battalion Of Saints, Drunk Injuns, and J.F.A. are your jam, then this piece of history is probably already on your want list. Limited pressing, so get on it! –Chad Williams (Not Like You, notlikeyourecords.com, notlikeyouzine@gmail.com)

FAMILY FRIEND: Self-titled: CS
If Paul Westerberg were to nearly drown in an enormous milkshake only to be rescued, a bit too late, by Tommy Stintson, and Paul said, "I'm not the same anymore. From now on, I only play acoustic guitars and drink skim milk," it might sound like Family Friend. A random sampling of lyrics: "It's a short life of trouble, girl / for a boy with a broken heart." Nine songs, cover art features a sleepy dog. –Jim Joyce (Self-Aware)

FILIAMOTSA: *Like It Is:* CDEP
Experimental music from Nancy, France. As far as I can tell, they are influenced by the '70s sounds of King Crimson. Unfortunately, when I play this disc everything is CAPITALIZED. The song titles, the band name, the album title—EVERYTHING. It feels like they are screaming at me when I play it back. One song called "Maybe" is over ten minutes long. Sorry, but this feels like a prog blanket covered in molasses. Hopefully I can escape soon. –Sean Koepenick (Aagoo, press@fiverosespress.net)

FLAG OF DEMOCRACY / DEAD MILKMEN: Split: 7"
As a publicity stunt, this release from two of Philadelphia's finest bands was originally announced as a lost record, recorded in 1985. It isn't. But it *is* a fun attempt at trying to sound as 1985 as possible by two groups that were there. Love them or hate them, Dead Milkmen mean a lot to a lot of us.

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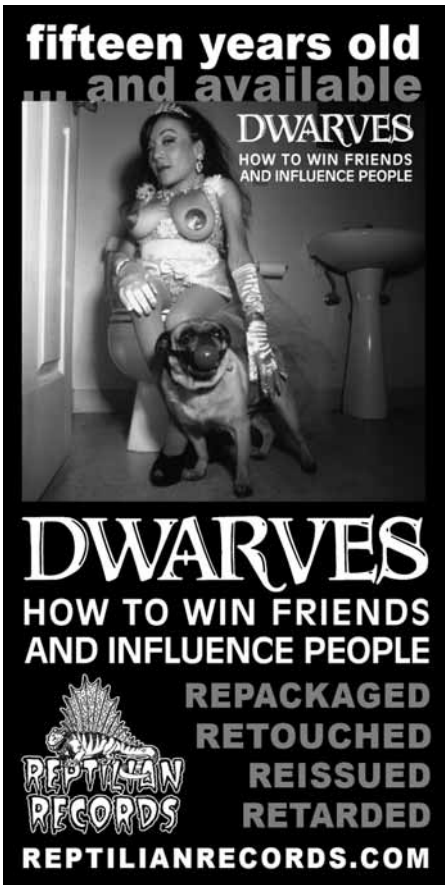

When I first started listening to punk and hardcore in junior high in the mid-1980s, they were one of the first things I heard. A lifelong fan, I've grown to accept the fact that some of their output isn't as remarkable as their classic early records. Their track on this split is one of their strongest in a long time, channeling the best of the primary Milkmen by combining biting, satiric lyrics with catchy, wacky, fast music. F.O.D., perhaps most famous for being referenced in a Dead Milkmen lyric, are an underrated group in their own right, with their three entries on this split being highly enjoyable as well. Forget the fact that this isn't a lost record and find it, if that makes any sense. Neither band has put out anything this vital in ages, so it's a welcome return to form for two crucial outfits of punk—past and present. –Art Ettinger (SRA, srarecords.com)

FLAG OF DEMOCRACY / EX FRIENDS: Split: 7"
Thirty years later and F.O.D. can still crank out the jams. It may not be as manic as it was when they were teenagers, and they may be playing about half as many chords as they did on their seminal albums, but, if anything, that's just a testament to how goddamn gnarly those LPs are. These new tracks are perfect for old fans, or anyone new to the band. Snotty, fast punk done right. Ex Friends play a safer brand of punk-inspired rock. Equipped with female backing vocals, key changes, and lyrics that focus a lot on eyes and "looking at one another," it's definitely for the slower-paced set. Not bad by any means, just starkly different compared to the forever-young exuberance of our hallowed F! O! D! –Daryl (SRA, srarecords.com)

FLAG OF DEMOCRACY / MERDA: Split*: 7"*
I consider F.O.D. to be right at the tail end of the original maxi-wave of hardcore, which means they're one of the last hardcore bands in which I have legitimate interest. Always interesting to hear how skilled practitioners of the craft work with its obligatory millstones of tempo and song structure to create something that transcends, even briefly, the last thirty years of mind-numbing stupefaction with which the genre has presented us, but they get it done on "Under My Dumb" and "Suicide Squeeze." Merda are some nutty Brazilians who want to wax your bikini area and sing about pudding. I don't think god wants it any other way. BEST SONG: Merda, "Cica Pudding" BEST SONG TITLE: Merda, "Can I Try the Hell?" FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: The cover painting of two smoking elves was made by the mother of Merda's guitarist in 1969. –Rev. Nørb (SRA, srarecords.com)

FLESH EATING CREEPS: *The Book about the Movie: Complete Recordings 1995-2000:* CS
Ripping, manic hardcore akin to brutality experts Goat Shanty and Society Of Friends, Also Known As The Quakers, who practically wrote the book on speed picking in hardcore—though Flesh Eating Creeps do it fairly well themselves. There are moments when things settle down long enough to reveal a little bit of indie and math metal influence—but the overall nature of their sound is unhinged aggression at times—coming across as unpretentious freeform jams. It's important to keep in mind that these tracks date back to the mid-'90s and carry on into the new millennium: a weird time when powerviolence's first and second waves were quickly fading, emo was evolving into screamo, and mosh-core was ignorant as fuck but at least the riffs were still good. In listening to these tracks fifteen years after the band's demise, it becomes apparent that this band may have been underappreciated at the time, seeing as how they probably didn't fit in with their contemporaries. Certainly not a band that everyone will agree on but definitely one that deserves consideration if you're into bands on Vermiform, Gravity, or Initial Records. Comes packaged in a book on cassette-style shell cover with extensive liner notes, alternate j-card artwork, stickers, buttons, and limited to fifty copies. –Juan Espinosa (Handstand, handstandrecords.com, flesheatingcreeps.com)

FLESH RAG: Self-titled: LP
The factoids: three piece from Toronto. Second pressing of a one-sided red vinyl LP, limited to one hundred copies with a squiggly silkscreen on side B. The feelings: first song sounds joyously and raucously like Portland's beloved Minds—punchy, swaggering, and ferocious. Just charming as hell. Unfortunately, that starter-gate momentum gets dragged into the muck with a number of subsequent mid-tempo dirges replete with reverb-washed vocals and feedback solos. Every once in a while there are flashes of that same initial velocity, but it's sparse. The results: Flesh Rag's kinda fast, kinda slow. Kinda garage punk, kinda punk, kinda just moored in SST-like dirges. A little too all over the map for me. If this record was a kid in Punk Class, he'd be sitting in the middle of the room, not really sticking out all that much, turning in his assignments mostly on time, and occasionally say something fucking brilliant. –Keith Rosson (Surfin' K)

FLEXX BRONCO: *Volume 3:* LP
Flexx Bronco has been around awhile, and they put on a great, rocking live show. Drink a beer or twelve while watching them and you're gonna have a good time. Trouble is, on record it just doesn't work as well. They don't have the great songs that similarly crafted rock'n'roll bands like the Supersuckers or Hellacopters have. Average songs, average vocals, stock riffs and arrangements. By all means, go see 'em live, but I'd pass on the records. –Chad Williams (Self Destructo, selfdestructorecords.bandcamp.com, selfdestructorecords@gmail.com)

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FLOWERS OF EVIL: Self-titled: LP
Noisy, art-damaged punk rock... or something. The music is charged full of energy and the vocals are up front and sassy in their manner, despite sounding like they were sung through some crackly, blown-out microphone. Amid all the noise and controlled chaos are bouncy rhythms and percussion to keep you on the ground. However—after listening to this many times—nothing about these songs is memorable. It might help if the vocalist allowed for the music to have some room instead of singing over the entire thing—maybe. –Matt Average (Deranged)

FRENCH EXIT / HILLARY CHILTON: Split: 7"
This review is totally bittersweet for me, as I believe this is French Exit's last record after breaking up in 2015. In any case, this 7" contains two tracks from each band. French Exit's tracks are in step with earlier releases—crunchy guitars, plenty of dual guitar, and vocal interplay. Hillary Chilton chose to go a more angular, experimental route. While the word spastic might be a bit extreme, these cats are kind of all over the place in a good way. Looks like you might be able to score this on banana yellow wax. –Garrett Barnwell (On The Real)

GENERATION SUICIDA: *Edicion Especial Para Lantinoamerica:* Flexi
First things first: I listened to the first thirty seconds of this on the wrong speed and it was fantastic, so when you finish reading this review and inevitably buy this record, make sure to do the same. Now that it's running at the appropriate 45 RPM, it is still ripping hard. I know there's been a minor amount of hype behind this band for the last year or so but, I for some reason, have not heard them until now. The songs are both mid-tempo romps that reminds me in part of early Finnish punk (the punk punk not the hardcore punk) and have a feel like the Rayos X singles (they apparently share members so that makes sense) but is more melodically driven than Rayos X. The guitar tone is clean and the bass drives the music while the drums maintain a pretty basic presence in the background and leave room for the vocals to carry the tune on the top. The recording and style is still really rough around the edges, but it seems very calculated an intentional. This style of punk is really my bread-and-butter and these folks are nailing it here. Track this down and buy it! –Ian Wise (Going Underground)

GOODBYE PARTY: *Silver Blues:* LP
Maybe I just don't have enough silver to get these blues. However, if you're partial to pretentious, one-man vanity projects with lots of studio wankery and lyrics like, "If you get lonely, go find a heart / or someone to sew you / when you fall apart," you might like Mr. Party. –Craven Rock (Salinas)

HAMILTONES, THE: Self-titled: CS
Surf music must be much more fun to play than to listen to. How else to explain another entry into the vast sea of an overpopulated genre? Two of the six tracks are twenty-five seconds or less, probably the appropriate length of attention span for toothless background music. –Matt Seward (More Power Tapes, morepowertapes.bandcamp.com)

HANGMEN, THE: *"What a Girl Can Do" b/w "The Girl Who Faded Away": 7"*
Windian has scored a nice resurrection with this '65 single from The Hangmen. The Hangmen were a regional D.C. act who, according to the Windian website, once played at Robert Kennedy's house. Must have been a wild night. There is no avoiding the Beatle-esque-ness of these two songs, but they're solid rockers with good harmonies. If you're into '65, it's high quality. A real lost gem. –Billups Allen (Windian)

HARMONICA LEWINSKI: *Naked Brunch:* 7" EP
"I'm seein' shootin' stars inside of titty bars" is a damn great line, and that's the kind of mondo trasho eloquence that Harmonica Lewinski excretes in their *Naked Brunch* 7". Circusy keys traipse on fuzzy bass and surf on beachy Dick Dale guitar, while Tarzan pounds away at the skins. It's like the garage punk aesthetic of The Cramps got lost in the jungle with the salacious creep-factor of Fat White Family. Someone please give John Waters a call: these freaks should score all of his future films. Two thumbs way up. Author's note: best listened to while cloaked in leopard print and as stoned as Cheech. –Simone Carter (Reel Time, reeltimerecordss@gmail.com, reeltimerecordss.bigcartel.com)

HARPOON FOREVER: *American Flag:* 7" EP
Harpoon Forever's cover art for this EP is deceiving in 2015, but it doesn't fall from the indie rock tree of the 1990s. Four tracks of Silkworm-esque tunes, but without some of Silkworm's humor. It's not hard to get lost in the music on this one. "Garden Paradigm" is simply great. –Steve Adamyk (Sweater & Pearls, harpoonforever.bandcamp.com)

HEAT DUST: Self-titled: LP
This right here is one of those albums that is so great, it's life-affirming. You could call this post-punk, but that would be selling it short. Think of the Chameleons meeting Beautiful Skin (especially the vocals), and you get something like Heat Dust. The guitar figures heavily in the sound, slashing and careening around, sometimes shimmering, as in the song "Anybody." Meanwhile, the bass and drums move everything forward with a certain swiftness while bringing that slightly brooding edge. The bass steps forward in "Seeking a Praxis" with just the right amount of distortion to announce its presence and singe your ears. The song structures are dynamic and layered with different textures coming up against one another—tempos change and varying moods come into play. In "Always," where the song starts off

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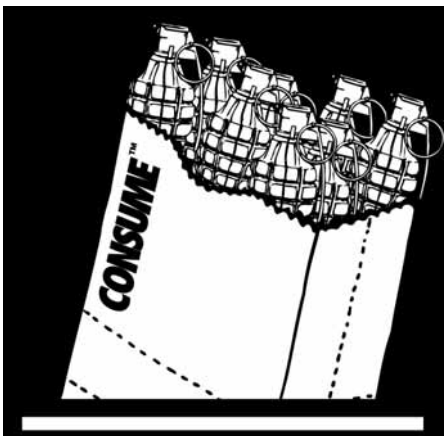

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with shimmery guitar, the tempo builds to a boil and the song suddenly shifts and breaks through the dark clouds to sound almost pop—then ends close to where it started. "Do You Think About It?" is the sole instrumental on this album and is still very expressive despite its lack of words. Tempos shift, the guitar rings and clangs, and there's an air of despair over the whole thing. I strongly urge you to get this; easily one of the best albums of the year. –Matt Average (The Flenser, theflenser.com)

HEX:
***Poison in the System/The Demos:* CD**
A collection of four demos from a Sunderland anarcho punk band founded in 1984 and containing future members of HDQ and Leatherface, to name a few. It's another one of those instances when one gets to hear the growth of a band brimming with ideas—things start off with an odd mix of Conflict and post-punk and blossom into driving post-punk with some great guitar work by the time things wind down to the last three tunes. Good stuff. –Jimmy Alvarado (Boss Tuneage)

HIEROPHANTS: *Parallax Error:* EP
From the same camp that brought you Eddie Current Suppression Ring, Total Control, Ooga Boogas, and Ausmuteants comes this wonderful slab of wax. The aforementioned bands give a nod in the direction these Aussies take, veering away from the traditional paths of "punk." Fiercely individual, the album swings and grooves but also has a palpable nervous tension. Elements of The Fall, Squeeze, and any number of one-single wonders from the bleak English DIY scene of the late '70s. I love how the bands from down under have ignored the rules and just make arresting music. Fantastic. –Tim Brooks (Aaargh! / Goner)

HIGHER STATE, THE: *"(Consider It) A Debt Repaid" b/w "In a World That Just Don't Care": 7"*
If you're into Teenage Shutdown-style jangle rock, The Higher State are carrying that torch well. This recent single contains two mid-tempo pseudo-'60s rockers. The A-side moves. The B-side is an up-all-night comedown with a simple keyboard solo in the middle. Perfect for looking off of a bridge or a montage in a non-linear movie. Solid single. –Billups Allen (13 O'Clock)

HI-LITES, THE: Self-titled: LP
On the surface, this looks like the typical lo-fi garage rock record. It's got a retro design with images of vampires and ghouls all over the cover. As soon as the needle hits vinyl, however, it becomes clear that there is nothing typical about this record. There's no goofy, ghoulish rock'n'roll. The true theme here is the sea. But it goes deeper than that. In songs with titles like "Lighthouse" and "The Fall and the Shipwreck," boats and the sea really only serve as metaphors for finding clarity, for searching for meaning and truth amidst life's complexities. It's thoughtful stuff, and so is the music itself. Not content to just stomp and be fuzzy, the band creates a dense tapestry that really pulls you in and makes you feel the waves and smell the salt of the sea. It's very powerful. –MP Johnson (Purepainsugar)

HOLDER'S SCAR:
***Sin without Doubt:* 7" EP**
Hardcore malcontents pop in, wreck the place, and leave it burning to the ground before you even realize they were even in the neighborhood. Six tracks of driving thrash, and not a stinker in the bunch. –Jimmy Alvarado (To Live A Lie)

HOLIDAY: Self-titled: 7"
Straight-forward, modern punk that's earnest and melodic, like the bastard sons of Lawrence Arms and Gordon Gano's Army. One of the vocalists has a softer voicing than the other, but between the two of them you get a good mix. It's not flashy and it doesn't rely on current trends; it's just well-written, sincerely executed music for people who want something they can hold on to and know it came from somewhere honest and real. –Daryl (Brassneck / Antikörper Export / Lost Cat / Pumpkin / JSNTGM)

HORACE PINKER: *Recover: 7"*
Three-song single on clear vinyl. It's been awhile since we have heard from this band and even longer since results were put to wax. You can expect to hear tight songs with catchy melodies, solid playing, and all that jazz. If you haven't heard this band before, think Down By Law or Face To Face with a Midwest sensibility. Here's hoping this is just a teaser for another full length and more touring! –Sean Koepenick (Dead Broke)

HUE BLANC'S JOYLESS ONES:
***Stoning Josephine:* LP**
I feel like if Ian Curtis was still alive and well, he'd be in a band that sounds like this. But more so if Ian Curtis found happiness, or at least discovered a way to curb his depression. It leans heavy on the Joy Division influence, on more of an upbeat, rock'n'roll tip. Right about now I've probably lost you. Just hear me out—things can be contradicting and coalescent at the same time. Vocally, I can hear Ian right there with Hue Blanc. Musically, it's like an age progression from a sketch artist. Much like when the man is looking for someone years after an initial testimony and they have to guestimate what someone will look like later on in life, this is what I think Curtis lead post-punk would sound like today. Only swap the keys in for horns and less shoegazey than you might imagine. Though, for whatever reason, the band's name is printed nowhere on this record and I was lead to believe they were called Stoning Josephine. The only indicators are "Produced by Hue Blanc" and "Everything else by the Joyless Ones." –Kayla Greet (Certified PR)

HUM HUMS, THE: *Back to Front:* CD
At some point the Ramones and the Beach Boys got down and produced

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some kind of punk rock Japanese lovechild and I am hopelessly head over heels for The Hum Hums. If you don't stop this one on the first spin, you probably won't ever want to. –Madeline (Waterslide, waterslideрecords.bandcamp.com)

IMMOLATO TOMATOES: *Stumbling Block, Complete Recordings 86-88:* CD
Forgotten English band Immolato Tomatoes are mid-'80s-as-hell, drawing influence from Revolution Summer D.C. bands and 7 Seconds, with a few late-Black Flag guitar skronks for good measure. The CD contains liner notes from the band and twenty-two tracks, which span three shoddily recorded and poorly preserved demos. Quite a few songs are repeated, giving the feeling of a local band spinning its wheels, but this project is still a worthwhile labor of love. –Chris Terry (Boss Tuneage)

INSTIGATORS: *Phoenix:* CD
More crucial history from the great Boss Tuneage records, this time the second Instigators album along with a live set. The band's first LP *Nobody Listens Anymore* is still my favorite, but their second still hits the spot. The band at this point was an almost a completely different lineup and entity to the one that made the first LP. Gone were their nods to the anarcho world of bands like the Subhumans, taking on to a much more obvious USHC direction. This album shows the influence of the massive amount of touring this band did throughout Europe and the States (a thing very few bands of the era were doing to the extent they did), complete with bandanas and scissor kicks. Musically on this release the band have an almost mid-period Dag Nasty sound with Andy Turner's unmistakable vocals. As with discs from my youth, it's difficult to divorce a time and a place from the music. I absolutely love this and am happy it's easily available for everyone else to enjoy. –Tim Brooks (Boss Tuneage, bosstuneage.com)

ISKRA: *Ruins:* LP
There are a lot of reasons to be angry. I spend most days frustrated by the fucked-up shit that goes on at home and abroad. Well, here are ten more reasons to decry the state of the world. Iskra burst out of the gate with "Lawless," screaming anarchist dictums: "Individuality is forfeit, culture destroyed / Militaristic carrion, totalitarian interests." Wrap your head around that. The songs are on the longer side, but they aren't simply blast beats and guttural growls. The metallic, face-melting riffs unravel and punctuate the caustic lyrics. It's symphonic anarcho metal, especially on "Predator Drone MQ-1," an objection to drone warfare. Iskra is relentless. They sometimes verge on Insect Warfare-level grind. They're thought provoking. Iskra forces you to ask, "What is our meaning? / What is our purpose?" You might not like the answer, but some questions you have to ask. –Sean Arenas (Profane Existence, profanexistence.com)

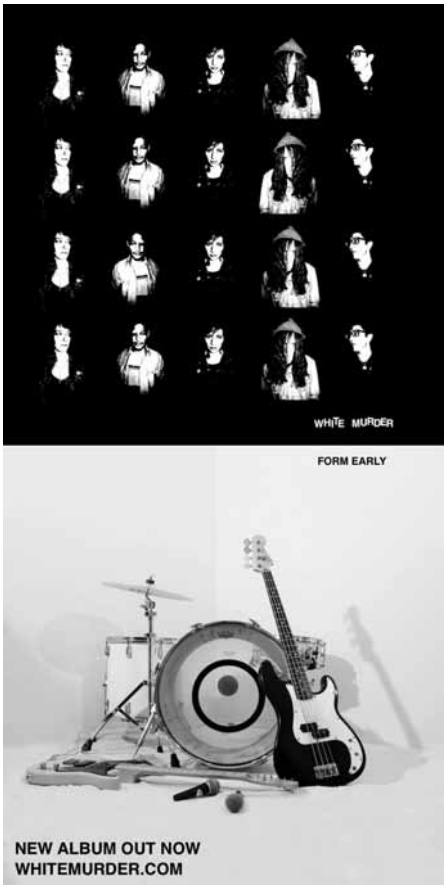
JACQUES LE COQUE: *Tip of My Tongue: 7"* EP
Pop punk hit perfection with Jacques Le Coque. Layered, spider web-thin vocals stretch over too-catchy riffs and an infectious beat that moves your bones to dance. *Tip of My Tongue* draws on the melody-rich prowess of pioneering punk forefathers Hüsker Dü and adds a granulated grittiness that elevates it to being one of the sharpest releases of the year. These dudes have sculpted a damn fine EP, and it only gets better after each listen. –Simone Carter (Windian)

JAILL: *Brain Cream:* CD
For some reason, I've always assumed Jaill were from NYC, or somewhere on the West Coast. Clearly I was way off, but I imagine these cats are quite the hometown heroes in Milwaukee. There's never been a shortage of hot acts from Wisconsin, sure, but Cream City seems like an unlikely place of origin for these dream pop masterminds (albeit the title of the long player in question *is* "Brain Cream"). "Getaway" is clearly a fan favorite, but the whole record stands out quite well the whole way through. ("Picking My Bones" is likely tops for me.) Jaill's lateral jump from Sub Pop to Burger is a solid one, as *Brain* Cream doesn't miss a beat. –Steve Adamyk (Burger)

KATIE DEY: *Asdfasdf:* CS
This collection of acoustic/electronic bedroom folk pop is strange and calming and seems to be from the sunlit pastel future we may never actually see. Kate Bush and pop punk combined might be a fair description? The autotune-ish vocals may set some people off, but it's one of those things that seems too bizarre until five years down the road and you hear it in every pop song, like it's always been there. Optimal for long subway rides and making dinner and hanging around in the sick, sad world that is the only planet we have, at least for the time being. –Matt Werts (Orchid Tapes, orchidtapes.com)

KNEW, THE: *Schmew:* LP
Chock full of high energy glam, pop punk, and a whole lot of indie, The Knew really pops. Like a mix of Tony Molina's take on Thin Lizzy, a serious dose of the Thermals, and Weezer. If you like any of those bands you'll be into this LP. Fast, fun, and optimistic punk. –Camylle Reynolds (Greater Than)

KNOWLTON BOURNE: *Songs from Motel 43:* CD
I know nothing about this motel. I do know that this solo artist hails from Mississippi and is in his early twenties. I can also take a wild guess that he has never read an issue of this magazine. But maybe his press agent mailed this release to HQ. The songwriting is definitely capable. Fans of Steve Earle and Wilco may find some music here that excites them. I doubt that most readers of this magazine will feel the same. –Sean Koepenick (Misra, misrarecords.com)



KOUKOUVAYA, THEE: *This Is the Mythology of Modern Death:* CD
Super pretentious album titles and taking forever to actually start the first song is not a good starting off point for a review album. Oh, wait, that was the song. It just never got off the ground. Five minutes of vaguely 4AD-sounding drone and ambient noise does not a compelling sound make. You are not Cranes. Things don't get better the rest of the way through. If you just cannot get enough of mid-'90s post-rock with ambient and dancey overtones, here is yet another addition to the stack. –Mike Frame (Saint Marie, saintmarierecords.com)

LABOR CAMP: *Musica Divina & Humana:* CD
Rock from a buncha cats with roots deep in the punker milieu. This benefits greatly from some spot-on production work, courtesy of Mr. Paul Roessler. The result is a much more cohesive, spirited sound than its predecessor. The band bounds from bluesy roots rock to psychedelia to, well, punk—with some stops in the gray areas in between. The results are engaging and brimming with ideas. –Jimmy Alvarado (Pit-I-Ful)

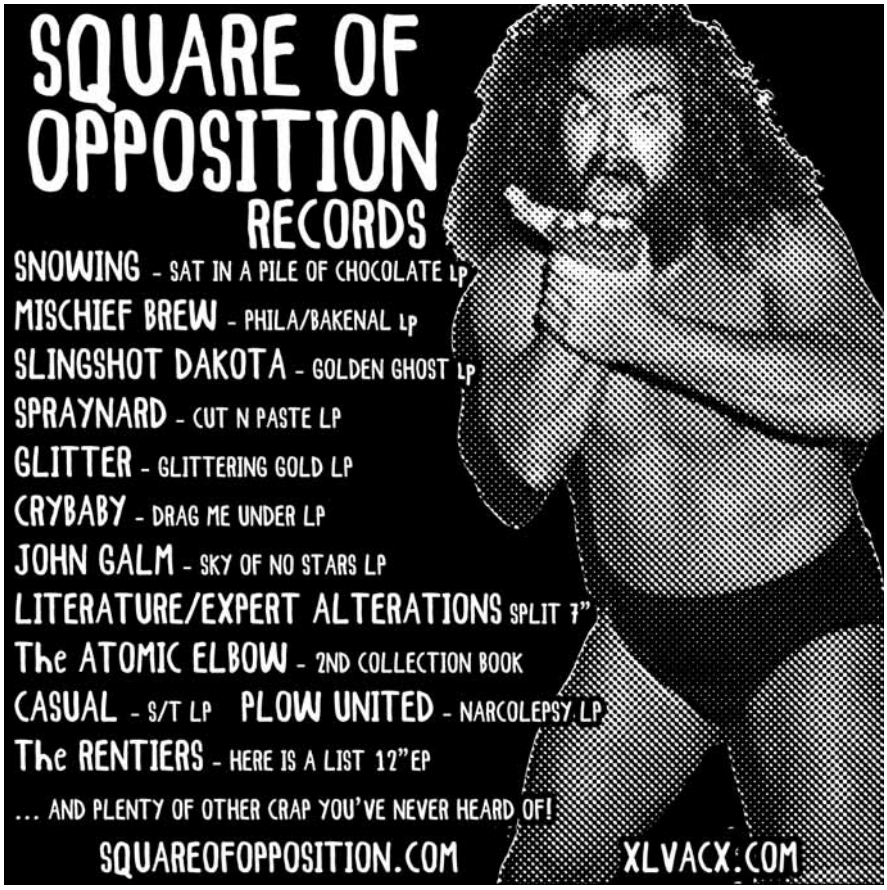
LAST SONS OF KRYPTON: *Teenage Trash:* CS
Teenage Trash is the perfect title for this youthful throwback to early punk. It's stupid, fun, upbeat, humorous, and sounds like it was recorded in a large metal can. Apparently, these guys were the most hated band in the Wisconsin scene around '95 for their shitty attitudes and antics but nobody could stop playing their records, and this re-release is a big deal for a lot of folks. Deservedly so, this album is boiling over with restless, repressed energy that can only come from some brats from Manitowoc, Wis. If you want depth and nuance you best look somewhere else, but if you simply want some fast, pissy, goofy punk to put a smile on your face and a stomp in your step, get this now. –Craven Rock (Rainy Road)

LAYMAN: *Blue Mind:* CS
The '90s slacker vibes start coming at you right from the cover: an inviting-looking swimming pool, rich with soft, diffused teal—just looking at it kind of gives me a hypnotic, slowed-down feeling. Whooa. The music is more than fitting, a lazy wash of breathy, Cranberries-esque vocals and heavy, low-end guitar fuzz. The bass is clear and melodic throughout, which lends that extra alt throwback authenticity. More structured and poppy than Sonic Youth, but it's impossible not to make the comparison. This tape is just what it looks like, a glimpse of a sun-kissed, maybe-not-quite-real Southern California nostalgia. –Indiana Laub (Paradise, paradisefuzz@gmail.com, paradiserecords.bigcartel.com)

LEFTÖVER CRACK: *Constructs of the State:* CD
Having risen from the ashes of Choking Victim, New York City's Leftöver Crack return with their third album in fourteen years. I'll admit 2001's *Mediocre Generica* was an attention grabber with its then-innovative blend of hardcore, ska punk, and even a little black metal. The follow-up album *Fuck World Trade* was straight-up boring despite its deliberately offensive title. *Constructs of the State* falls somewhere in between the two previous records, where it's neither remarkable nor completely flat. The politics are still that of anti-capitalism, anti-racism, anti-sexism, as well as a dismal outlook on life and love. I like to imagine people frowning as they "pick it up" in the pit. Features guest vocals by Jesse Michaels of Operation Ivy and Common Rider, the former band being the forefathers of countless waves of ska punk, for better or worse. –Juan Espinosa (Fat)

LENTIC WATERS: *The Path:* LP
This German band pretty much nails the whole "emo violence" thing. It's full of the heart-on-your-sleeve, DIY, love-thy-neighbor attitude that the scene developed as "screamo" became a more acceptable term. There are the obligatory pull-backs where the guitars go clean and play those arpeggios that exist solely in this style of music. There's a focus on the "epic," there are His Hero Is Gone-style breaks and inverted chords galore. The liner notes champion pretty safe politics, punctuated with statements like "Emotions can't be bad!" I explain all of this because I need you to understand that this record is a genre piece and offers absolutely no stylistic progression in the genre it settles into. You are not hearing the next Orchid, Funeral Diner, or Circle Takes The Square. That being said, for fans of the genre, this is a great addition to the style. The recording is clear, and the bass-heavy mix was a good choice as it makes it easier to hear the structures of the songs. If this record hadn't shown up in my review pile and I had seen this band live, I would buy this record and definitely recommend it to friends of mine that are still riding the scream wave. –Ian Wise (Deadwood)

LOBSTER KILLED ME: *Fake World:* LP
Listen: I'm old as fuck and have a house full of records, so it takes a lot to get the hairs standing up on my neck. This is the third time I've reviewed this band, and dare I say this is even better than their last LP, which I absolutely loved. After the last review where I questioned their choice of band name, I got a lovely letter from the band explaining the name, which made sense, but doesn't change the fact that the name is terrible! Who gives a fuck? The sounds within are wonderful. As with their previous records, this has shimmering guitars with a distinct Euro flavor like HDQ, Snuff, Instigators—and this time—a sprinkling of my favorite French band Les Thugs. Self-recorded, self-released this is a testament to punk spirit. Top ten material for sure. As I said last time, even if you can't find a physical copy, go find them on the internet. –Tim Brooks (Gestalt, lobsterkilledme.bandcamp.com)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LONGINGS: Self-titled: LP
Here is some killer post-punk from some place other than Portland, OR. Longings are from Amherst, Mass. The songs remind me of the more upbeat Christian Death songs on *Only Theater of Pain*. "Severed Ties" has a Rikk Agnew guitar sound. The alternating male/female vocals help give the record more dynamics. Fans of the Estranged, Thee Indoors, Christian Death, and the Proletariat will love this band. –Ryan Nichols (Echo Canyon, echocanyonrecords.com)

MALE PATTERNS / SCUZZ: Split: 7"EP
Scorcher of a split! Male Patterns remind me a bit of World Burns To Death, but slightly more tuneful and less heavy and dark. The vocalist has a deep, throaty sound that adds weight to the charging music. Their two originals crank like a motherfucker. I wish they would have played one more original in place of the Showcase Showdown cover, as their sound is a hell of a lot better than the band they chose to cover. Also, I hope they write about more relevant topics on the next release, not how cheap punk is and cell phone zombies. Scuzz are more chaotic and sonically blistering. The guitar has a slightly blown-out quality, the vocalist sounds just as blasted, and the whole band sounds as though they're about to spin out into a ditch. Hardcore punk that is relentless. Pretty damn good. Hope to hear more from both bands in 2016. –Matt Average (Loud Punk, loudpunk.com)

MAMA: *Night Shoot:* 2 x 7"EP
MAMA is from Chicago? Could've fooled me. This whole record reeks of Southern California. Yet another great band on the wave of punked-up '70s rock, but far from any clichés or cheesiness. Think Sheer Mag with a male vocalist, for a start. Maybe that's what sets a lot of these bands apart from so many of their contemporaries in recent years—solid vocals. Gritty and catchy. Guitar licks, not solos (but lots of them. There's a big difference between the two, you know). They have a record coming out a Hozac in the future, but I'm surprised Trouble In Mind hasn't swooped them up yet, to be honest. "25 Forever" forever gives me a Jay Lindsey vibe, but the title track is clearly at the finish line. Glad I'm onto these guys. –Steve Adamyk (Automatic, automaticrecordings.bandcamp.com)

MANIAC: *"Chola Queen" b/w "Calamine": 7"*
"Chola Queen" is a solid reworking of Harpo's "My Teenage Queen," while the flip's a quick, frenzied power pop number rife with whoa whoas and a nice little guitar lead. Brevity seems to be key here, but it's fun while it lasts. –Keith Rosson (No Front Teeth)

MARK VAN HOEN: *Nightvision:* CD
I listen to a lot of non-punk music and one style I've been getting into more is ambient electronic. Think Brian Eno. Yeah, it may seem almost an antithesis of punk, but sometimes I need music that can block out all the noise in my head and help me focus on the task at hand, whatever it might be. Sometimes Black Flag just doesn't cut it. Mark Van Hoen's album *Nightvision* fits in well in that category. Besides Eno, I'm reminded of Boards Of Canada, another group I enjoy. I refuse to do drugs to this music, but I can easily see someone doing that while listening to these ten songs. Totally chill music to listen to with the lights out in your bedroom while you drink tea and stare into the emptiness. –Kurt Morris (Saint Marie, saintmarierecords.com)

MENACE: *London Stories:* CD
These U.K. punkers are back with a new full length that bristles with energy and delivers on the promise of their earliest singles. "Vote Punk Rock" and the title track are standouts on this one. Fiery guitars, pounding drums, and rousing vocals make this a classic return to form. Highly recommended. –Sean Koepenick (Self-released, menace.punk@yahoo.co.uk)

MIA LOUCKS: *Sister Honey Demos:* CS
Simple, stripped-down bedroom recordings—the kind where the vocalist sings in a fragile and whispery murmur over stilted acoustic guitar but also says "fuck" a lot. This is definitely going for a Waxahatchee feel. I admit that it's not really my jam, this lo-fi aesthetic of songs scribbled on scratch paper and recorded in ten minutes in some quirky location. Not that I have any idea about the origins of these particular songs, but… everyone knows that aesthetic. Full disclosure, I'm being a little snippier than I would if this didn't come with a sheet that tells me that Loucks' songs somehow channel her studies in East Asian philosophy. Hard not to be at least a little skeptical about that kind of statement, unless "Hey, Mr. DJ, she wants to show her titties," is a Confucian tenet I've forgotten about. But, setting that aside, this is fairly sweet and straightforward, with some nice harmonies. –Indiana Laub (Related, relatedrecords.com)

MICHAEL RAULT: *"Still Not Sad" b/w "Nothing Means Nothing":* CS
Canadian singer/songwriter Michael Rault straddles some bizarre line between Elliot Smith and The Beatles after they started experimenting with psychedelics and got interesting. –Jackie Rusted (Burger)

MIDNIGHT RERUNS: *Forces of Nurture:* LP
For fans of American pilsner, dressing in layers, '80s sitcoms, and the Replacements. Milwaukee's Midnight Reruns play real good, bop your head, work up the courage to cross the bar and introduce yourself-type songs. Great guitar arrangements and quirky vocal arrangements. I will have this one on repeat for a little while. Thanks, gang. –John Mule (Dusty Medical, dustymedical.com)

MINDLESS SHOW, THE: *10 Years of Epic Failures:* CD
This partial discography documents the past decade's worth of music

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from these Malaysian punks. The twenty-three tracks are an eclectic mix of styles, including melodic hardcore, streetpunk, pop punk, weird jazzy breakdowns, and a handful of ska moments. It's raw and scrappy as hell, and the weirdness is really what makes it. These guys play with so much unabashed energy that they frequently knock themselves a little out of time and key, especially in the early tracks. The lyrics are mostly in English, and while some of the translation is rough around the edges the underlying messages shine through. They're fed up with dead-end jobs, conformity, capitalism, racism, and media bullshit, to name a few targets of their vitriol. Pretty relatable stuff. This gets especially good toward the end of the CD, predictably; it's rad to hear how much they tighten up over the course of a few years. Definitely worth checking out, especially for fans of international punk. –Indiana Laub (Pissart, biteyourass@hotmail.com, pissart.blogspot.com)

MISERABLE FRIEND: *Thawed, Flawed, and Suffering:* CS
Thawed, Flawed, and Suffering is thick with ambient vocals and distorted melodies. Each song somehow throbs, scratches, sludges, drifts, and frays. A raw, rocking mix of shoegaze, alt, and post-punk. Seriously good; not one song lacks. Flip and repeat. –Camylle Reynolds (Self-released, miserablefriend.bandcamp)

MÜLLTÜTE: Self-titled: LP
This is the record I have been wanting ever since hearing their early 7" EPs (and the track on *MRR*'s *Sound the Alarms* comp). It's well worth the wait. Mülltüte deliver on the promise of their early records and push their sound further than anticipated. They are still the rough and raw hardcore punk band they've always been, with the scratchy guitars that sound as though they're being played through wrecked amps and a crazed vocalist, but here they're stretching out and making things more interesting with the driving post-punk of "Welle," a song that makes a great album even greater. The music slows down a bit, and gets a touch more dark and layered. Lianne's voice comes floating across the din midway through the song and it's pure gold. The instrumental "Versuche" that follows the raging "Glaube" was totally unexpected, but welcome. It shifts gears for a brief moment, allowing for reflection before going back to full-throttle, marching punk with "Familie, Werte, Traditionen." They display tuneful elements that give you something to hang on to. Great album from the first note to the last note. It's here, it's now, and you better get it. –Matt Average (Mülltüte, muetue@heartfirst.net)

MUTINY MUTINY: *Undefined:* CDEP
A Seattle post-punk band that has been refining their sound since 2010 comes roaring back with their third release. They describe their music as angular, so I'm not afraid to hijack that phrase and run with it to the checkout aisle. "Words Are Noise" offers up the most firepower, but all the songs have twists and turns that will reward repeated visits. Intriguing. –Sean Koepenick (Self-released, mutinymutiny.com)

NASTIES, THE: *Discipline:* CD
Many of the tracks on this were on The Nasties' demo CD but appear here in new versions. The Nasties live up to their name with tracks about having "The Shits" and wanting to hit on a friend's "Hot Sister." Lyrically, they didn't do much for me. Musically, the band plays mid-tempo punk rock. They had some cool leads on the track "Piece of Shit" and on their anthem "The Nasties." The track "Sky Is Falling," was a short, fast ripper that I liked, but otherwise I thought this was a well-produced snooze fest. –Paul J. Comeau (Sudden Death)

NO MORE FAVORS: *Cash Only:* 7" EP
Tough, crossover punk from Indy, also know as Naptown Motherfuckers. Think mid-period Poison Idea or Common Enemy, maybe even a much slicker Dayglo Abortions. This here EP is seven tracks of ripping thrash that doesn't give up. Extremely well executed. American as fuck. –Steve Adamyk (NMF, nomorefavors.bandcamp.com)

NOT TONIGHT & THE HEADACHES: *If You Were Real You'd Do Your Own Stunts:* CD
Ten tracks of Fat-style pop punk from the Northeastern shores of England. Honestly, nothing really stood out to my ears. It's executed and produced well but, in the end, there was nothing memorable that would merit repeated listens or a Garrett Barnwell stamp of approval. –Garrett Barnwell (Boss Tuneage, bosstunage.com)

NV'S, THE: *A Perfect Vision:* CD
Bits of early West Coast proto-core meet East Coast punk swagger. They even throw in some Iggy Pop-styled swing in "Farewell to Catatonia." The overall results are direct, punchy, and potent. High fives all 'round. –Jimmy Alvarado (Big Neck)

OBNOX: *Boogalou Reed:* LP
Obnox is not my speed, but I get the appeal of this. This is a loud album of blues rock-inspired riffs, turned out with occasional hip hop beats and a bit of shoegazer intervals to make the vocals sound otherworldly. I had heard about this band before and figured it was something I wouldn't like. And while I don't particularly like it, it's very well done. The album plays like a machine. There's something electrically special about it. I don't know what previous output sounds like, but I would bet if you like that, this is something you'd like. The song title "Too Punk Shakur" gets credit for being

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actually funny in a way I don't like. Just live with that sentence. –Billups Allen (12XU)

OFFENDERS: *Live at CBGB's 1985:* 2 x CD
Two discs, three live sets from 1982, 1985, and 2002, and thirty-four tracks total from one of the finest hardcore bands from Texas. The sound here is clear throughout, energy and playing precision is on-point, and the songs are fuggin' choice. If you haven't yet procured a copy of either their *Endless Struggle* or *We Must Rebel* releases, both of which were apparently recently reissued together by Southern Lord, they're most definitely the prime starting point. But they are not mandatory to appreciate what's contained here, 'cause this is some choice listening in its own right for newbie and vet alike. –Jimmy Alvarado (Beer City)

OI POLLOI / GRAND COLLAPSE: Split EP: 7"
Both bands have an uncompromising method of delivery. Oi Polloi is probably the better known of the two, due to them having been around for over thirty years. They open with "GCHQFU," a mid-tempo attack on the Government Communications Headquarters which monitors all and sundry within the U.K. before blasting into the more frantic "Contra El Sistema." Grand Collapse belies its youthfulness as a band by shredding through two tracks of staggeringly good metal-tinged hardcore underpinned by the excellent drumming of Glenn Tew. This single accompanies the bumper thirtieth anniversary edition of the fanzine *Artcore*, produced by the current Violent Arrest frontman Welly, and should be considered as a no brainer purchase. –Rich Cocksedge (Artcore, artcorefanzine.co.uk)

ONCE & FUTURE BAND: *Brain:* CS EP
The braintrust at Burger Records have severely progressed as a label since the days of Thee Makeout Party's singles and Nobunny's *Raw Romance* LP. Which, to be honest, feels like yesterday…. Fast-forward years later and Fullerton's boys have sold (likely) close to a hundred thousand tapes, aside from having a full-fledged roster of desired and sought after artists. If you're in the East Bay area, chances are you've heard of Once & Future Band. The *Brain* EP is a wild one. Its title track is nine minutes in length and probably took a fucking year to write. It's prog rock for sure, but I'm hearing more ELO on some of these tracks rather than King Crimson. Insanely well-recorded and strong debut release. –Steve Adamyk (Burger)

OPPOSITION RISING: *Riot Starter:* 7" EP
Pretty standard angry, gruff political hardcore. Lefty ranting and riffs galore, and I say that lovingly. I'm with these guys, to a point. Regarding the tech/internet phobia in "Stop Saying Stupid Shit Online," I don't know that "say the wrong thing and they'll come and arrest you" is entirely accurate. They'd need *a lot* of jail cells. But that's just quibbling about specifics. We're all living in this crappy world. Opposition Rising clearly recognizes that. –Matt Werts (Pine Hill, pinehillrecords.com)

ORENTHAL: Demo: CD
Fast melodic hardcore, just like mom used to make. Unfortunately, nostalgia doesn't get better with age. All the things that made melodic hardcore unmemorable and rather bland are still in effect. Maybe it's just the minimal nature of an EP, but I don't find this format to be particularly becoming to this brand of ultra-speedy thrash punk. The standout track here is clearly "Unintelligent Design," which has the band showing off their Propagandhi chops in full force. If they can reach that level of songwriting on their next effort, they might have something here. Grade: B. –Bryan Static (Self-released, orenthalmusic.bandcamp.com)

PACK: Self-titled: LP
Ugly Pop proves there are still lost punk albums worth getting excited about with the release of a self-titled album by Germany's Pack. Led by prog-seasoned guitarist Joerg Evers, Pack released a full-length and one single in the late '70s. Their best-known song "Come On" appears on *Bloodstains across Germany*. Now the band's full-length gets the full Ugly Pop reissue business with loads of liner notes and photos. Pack plays grinding, overdriven '60s chords on the canvas of minimal punk drumming. Evers is noticeably older than his '78 contemporaries in live shots, but his anger comes through as if punk had been waiting for him. "We Better Get Ready" starts the album with a vicious, three-chord rager. "Nobody Can Tell Us" has a singalong quality urging you to "do what you really want." The opening riff has a ratchety, party drum riff with a Teenage Shutdown sensibility. Evers embraced the back to the front attitude displayed by the bands of the time. Natural anger and an aptitude for nuanced intervals drive the album. It's a record aging punks will certainly take notice of. The songs retain that magic level of pissed felt in the British albums of the time. –Billups Allen (Ugly Pop, uglypop.com)

PALE LIPS: *Got a Sweet Tooth:* 7"
Truly sugary, fun garage pop. Pale Lips only veer away from candy talk briefly to sing very charmingly about murder ("Sweet Dreams"). If you're trying to curb your dessert/soda intake, this record may cause you to backslide, but it will be an enjoyable backslide. Okay, everyone raise your Dr. Pepper. To diabetes! –Matt Werts (No Front Teeth)

PARANOID: *Satyagraha:* CD
Paranoid is an English translation of the band's Japanese name. The CD is a bonus inclusion with the LP, and does not appear to exist separately. After some internet sleuthing, I deduced the band was not in fact Japanese, but Swedish. Musically, Paranoid play ripping d-beat, that will make you want to headbang until you have whiplash.

The album opens with digital noise before crashing into the first track. The ten tracks on this album rage but are all short, even for d-beat. The five-minute electronic organ outro closing the album is almost as long as the rest of the album proper. I thought this was great for what it was, but it didn't particularly move me. The lyrics and translations accompanying the LP version of this would have been nice to have. With just an empty CD sleeve, there's not much to talk about here. If you dig d-beat, this is worth checking out. –Paul J. Comeau (Konton Crasher, kidcharge84@gmail.com, kontoncrasher.blogspot.com)

PATSY: *"Tuley-Tude-High" b/w "Paradise": 7"*
Patsy are a current band from New Orleans, but they sound like the missing link between the Masque and the *Nervous Breakdown* 7". Bouncy and pogo-y, but with a sharp, unconformed punk edge. The female vocals transmit secret punk code, and while I'm not able to infer a meaning, I definitely *want to!* These songs rip! –Daryl (Total Punk)

PEACH KELLI POP: Self-titled: LP
I'm going to admit something totally lame: I've avoided this band for three albums because of the record covers. I know how that sounds, but I just can't get past the album covers. I even admire the uniformity. But it's young people's music, I guess. This band does do something new and raw with the three-chord punk song with ethereal vocal segments adding an out of tune and unpredictable element. "Shampoo" stands out as having about as much thinking as I like in a song. "It stings, stings, stings in your eyes." I like stuff like that. This isn't essential to me, but if you like that sort of Bay Area sound, I feel you'd like this. I saw them listed on one of those lame "punk bands to watch out for" lists on the internet. They strike me as having more staying power than being listed on one of those, if that helps. –Billups Allen (Bachelor)

PLEASURE LEFTISTS: *The Woods of Heaven:* LP
The Woods of Heaven is recorded with muted vocals, which I don't think does Haley Morris's deeply rich and haunting voice justice. With that said, this sophomore release is everything you'd expect from the Pleasure Leftists. Copious amounts of tedious, post-punk guitar is both anxious and melodic. It flutters back and forth between a constantly throbbing bassline. Their dark punk, new wave signature sound is both upbeat and somehow utterly laid back at the same time. They are at their strongest in their mid-tempo songs—(with beats that sway and propel), like "Protection" and "Reality Changes"—and bounce into danceable songs, like "Private Persons" and "You You." The songs "A New Name" and "Burning Down" have a darker churn that slows down the momentum built up on each side. *The Woods in Heaven* is consistent and solid but explores no new territory to differentiate from their first breakthrough self-titled LP. Still worth picking up. –Camylle Reynolds (Deranged)

POINT BLANK: Self-titled: 7"EP
Point Blank's self-titled 7" is hardcore done right. You'd expect nothing less from Danny D., a founding member of Underdog who plays bass, and Ken "KWE" Wagner, a scene legend in his own right who rocks the mic. The opener "No More" was a fast one, setting the tone for most of the record. Point Blank's namesake anthem was a slower jam certain to inspire epic singalongs and pile-ons when played live, and it was one of my favorite tracks. Lyrically, the band tackles issues both personal and political. I was particularly a fan of the positive messages in the tracks "Live for You" and "Well Defined." They were a nice juxtaposition to the violent imagery in the band's name, logo, and interspersed in their other lyrics. These negative images didn't detract from my appreciation of the band. On the contrary, this record was one of my favorite discoveries of 2015. If you're a fan of Underdog, or classic NYHC in general, you need to check this out. –Paul J. Comeau (Not Like You, pointblanknyhc@hotmail.com)

POINTED STICKS: *Northern Electric:* CD
"Impatient" is a nice bit of snotty power pop, "Tin Foil Hat" is built on a choice jazz shuffle, and the lion's share of the remaining tracks are heavy on '70s rock and pop. The songs are definitely well written, as can be expected, but somehow, the aforementioned exceptions notwithstanding, this just ain't sparking for me like it should. Could be the laid back delivery, could be a million other things, but, while most definitely good, I was rootin' for great, a bar this falls just shy of. –Jimmy Alvarado (Sudden Death)

PRONTO: Self-titled: LP
Fuck, this is great! Imagine a totally dirty and scuzzy lo-fi garage punk version of Fucked Up playing homage to both the hookiest '70s power pop and various KBD classics, and you might have some idea of where this is coming from. One song might have an oi influence (although, being from Melbourne, that could just be the Australian accent coming through) while the next one might sound like a Ramones-influenced '70s power pop song or a disjointed Gang Of Four-influenced track. There's a decent amount of variation here, but they never vary too far off from the "Fucked Up playing Cockney Rejects songs in a punk house basement" formula. Even at their least accessible moments, the plethora of hooks in all of these songs are un-fucking-deniable! Recommended. –Mark Twistworthy (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

RADIATOR HOSPITAL: *Torch Song:* LP
Radiator Hospital write short songs for sensitive people. Nothing ever feels undercooked. In less than two minutes,

a single song has sharper hooks than some entire records. *Torch Song* sounds like The Ergs!, Guided By Voices, and Paul Baribeau had a sad slumber party. It's all sincere and captivating. The power is in the execution. The mumbled, heartsick vocals embody the clawing voice inside our heads that we spend much of the day trying to bury. Radiator Hospital is unafraid to shed light on complicated feelings ("I just wasn't bred to sleep alone") without building a monolith to depression. The record has a cathartic effect. After listening, I'm purged of my emotional muck. –Sean Arenas (Salinas)

RADIOHEARTS: *Lot to Learn:* 7"
Bubblegummy power pop that isn't afraid to try a little tenderness. They open up with a riotous burner of a track and then let the listener know they have a softer side with the remaining three. They got the hooks, they got the harmonies, they got that courtly swagger that no power pop record can go with out. They even let the bass player get the spotlight for a hot second on "Let Them Know." No Front Teeth continues to be one of the most reliable labels for this sound, and Radiohearts are another prime example. –Daryl (No Front Teeth)

RATS REST: Self-titled: CS
Four songs. Sounds *very* much—and you can call this good or bad, depending—like Matt Freeman singing over Onion Flavored Rings. –Keith Rosson (Stay Punk Tapes)

RAZORBATS: *Camp Rock:* CD
Sits firmly between garage rock and hard rock, but gets a little too close to cocky glam rock for my taste. If I can confuse your band's intros with Mötley Crüe songs, I think I'm right to react a little adversely to that. The parts that work for me are the bits that are aping Ramones riffs, not the flanger-flavored sluggish breakdowns. Not that these are influences that the Razorbats are ashamed or embarrassed of, in fact they flaunt it proudly with single-ready tracks like "Kids of the 70s." I can't knock off points for musicianship or songwriting, but this is a standard case of "not for me." Listen if you think punk rock could maybe use more leather jackets, but more for the sake of fashion. Grade: B-. –Bryan Static (Self Destructo)

RED KATE: *When the Trouble Comes:* LP
I was ordering a cocktail at the bar when a lanky, bespectacled dude with a bowler on his bald head approached the bar next to me. "Must be one of the dudes in the out-of-town band. Probably thinks he's way too good for this shithole townie bar," I immediately surmised from atop my cloud of judgment. Turns out these Kansas City, Mo. natives are just a really great, down-to-earth, hilarious bunch of good-time dudes that have brought back the art of rock'n'fucking roll, baby! Riffing and snarling their way through the set, they rocked their way right into my little heart. Hard working and tight as hell, this band has paid its dues and you can hear it. When I found out they had been poorly reviewed by my beloved Razorcake, I decided they should get another chance, and I shall be the one to redeem them! This album does a great job mimicking the energy of that live show. No bullshit here. Just solid, no-frills, for the love of rock'n'roll tunes. It is unapologetically oozing with calls to action and a hint of debauchery. There's just one love song here by the name of "Pink Sweater," which is pleading with an object of affection, questioning her taste in d-bags, and attempting to woo her with promises of mocking famous works of art together, riding bikes, and taking her last smoke. It's all heart and it's all great stuff from some legitimately good shits! If you're looking for a lil' something to get that ass a-movin', you gotta give these guys a shot! –Jackie Rusted (replayrecordsusa.com)

RHDP: *Parusa:* 7" EP
What we have here is an excellent slab of bluesy, punk rock'n'roll. It's difficult to pinpoint why, but Virginia Beach seems to have always had bands like this kickin' around. Maybe the Candy Snatchers have something to do with that. By no means a bad thing, either. RHDP (unsure of what it stands for) are a solid and well-equipped band. Makes me miss the Pleasure Fuckers even more. –Steve Adamyk (Tension Head, tensionheadrecords.blogspot.com)

RHYTHM OF CRUELTY: *Saturated:* LP
Here's another great release from Mass Media. I can't help but be reminded of Mephisto Walz when I heard this record. Rhythm Of Cruelty have really lovely, dark, ethereal vocals over dreamy, minimal, dark-wave drum and bass. There is a good amount of experimentation and sampling throughout the record that makes me curious to see how this two-piece pull these songs off live. All the songs flow together nicely and there are no spaces between the tracks on the vinyl. If you like Christian Death, early Cocteau Twins, or Blouse, then you need to pick up this record immediately. –Ryan Nichols (Mass Media, contact@massmediarecords.com)

RIBBONHEAD: *Animals:* CS
Four songs and thirteen minutes of screamy hardcore punk from Chicago. The EP starts out with an aggressive burst of frenetic energy followed by a slower jam "Kneecapper," which has a rumbling bass and feedback on the guitar. The third song "Gray" is another fast tune, clocking in at under two minutes before the closer "CPD" comes on the scene. It's easily the best song on the album, due to an almost hypnotic swagger. A couple notes: the vocalist shouldn't sing. No. Cut that out. It's not often but Ribbonhead shouldn't try for melody, just aggression. It's what they do best. Also, I'm strangely entranced by the band's use of ambient sound at the end of the EP. Perhaps a side project or an entire album of it? I'd go for it. Whatever the case, this is a strong effort that I've listened it to more than I usually do for most reviews, which really says a lot. –Kurt Morris (Self-released)

DEAD TANK

The Elsinores "New Forms" LP
Sophomore LP from this bleak and nervy trio from Kentucky. Yields to early Cure, Merchandise, Chameleons, and Husker Du.

Bleed The Pigs / Thetan split LP
Two of Nashville's finest grind outfits on one colossal release. Fifteen politcally astute and furious tracks with top notch DIY packaging (vinyl etching, poster, patch, screened covers..)

Tentacles "Ambivalence" LP
Masterful screamo / emo violence from Texas. Fans of Honeywell and Shikari take note.

Senior Fellows "Shallow Grave For A Dying God" LP
Political sludge metal from Tulsa. Fans of Brainoil, Thou, Neurosis and Primitive Man will not be disappointed.

Virgin Flower "Absence of Essence" Tape
The Siege Fire "Dead Refuge" LP
Cloud Rat "Qliphoth" Tape
Decades/Failures "G00DBY3" LP
Post Teens / Rose Cross 7"
Thou "Ceremonies of Humiliation" 3xLP

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RIK & THE PIGS: *"Pig Sweat" b/w "Feed the Animal": 7"*
Raw, lo-fi, and abrasive punk rock from Portland, Ore. "Skidmarks on society. Glued in front of your TV. Make it up and you'll believe." Definitely doing right by the only other Rik-spelled-R-I-K name in punk, the legendary Rik L Rik (RIP). –Chad Williams (Total Punk, totalpunkrecords.tumblr.com)

RIPPERS, THE: *I Wanna Know Something About: 7"*
These Italian garage tycoons crank out rootsy, primal rock'n'roll in the best way possible. Slick licks and a coat of warm, fuzzy reverb cover the entirety of both cuts. And just so you know it's the real deal they buried a harmonica down in the mix. Top notch party central tracks for all the retro-rockers to bop around to in the now! –Daryl (Surfin' Ki, surfinkirec@gmail.com)

ROLANDO BRUNO: *Bailazo:* CD
In a surprising shift from their usual noisy blues/garage noise, Voodoo Rhythm has unleashed this fantastic album of Latin Cumbia music. Apparently, Rolando Bruno is in the garage punk band Los Peyotes, so the label connection makes a little more sense, but this is just killer Cumbia with a real psychedelic bent. A real surprise to be sure, but a pleasant one. Anyone with an open mind and any interest at all in psychedelic music will likely love this release from Rolando Bruno. I am looking forward to hearing more because this disc is unbelievably good. –Mike Frame (Voodoo Rhythm)

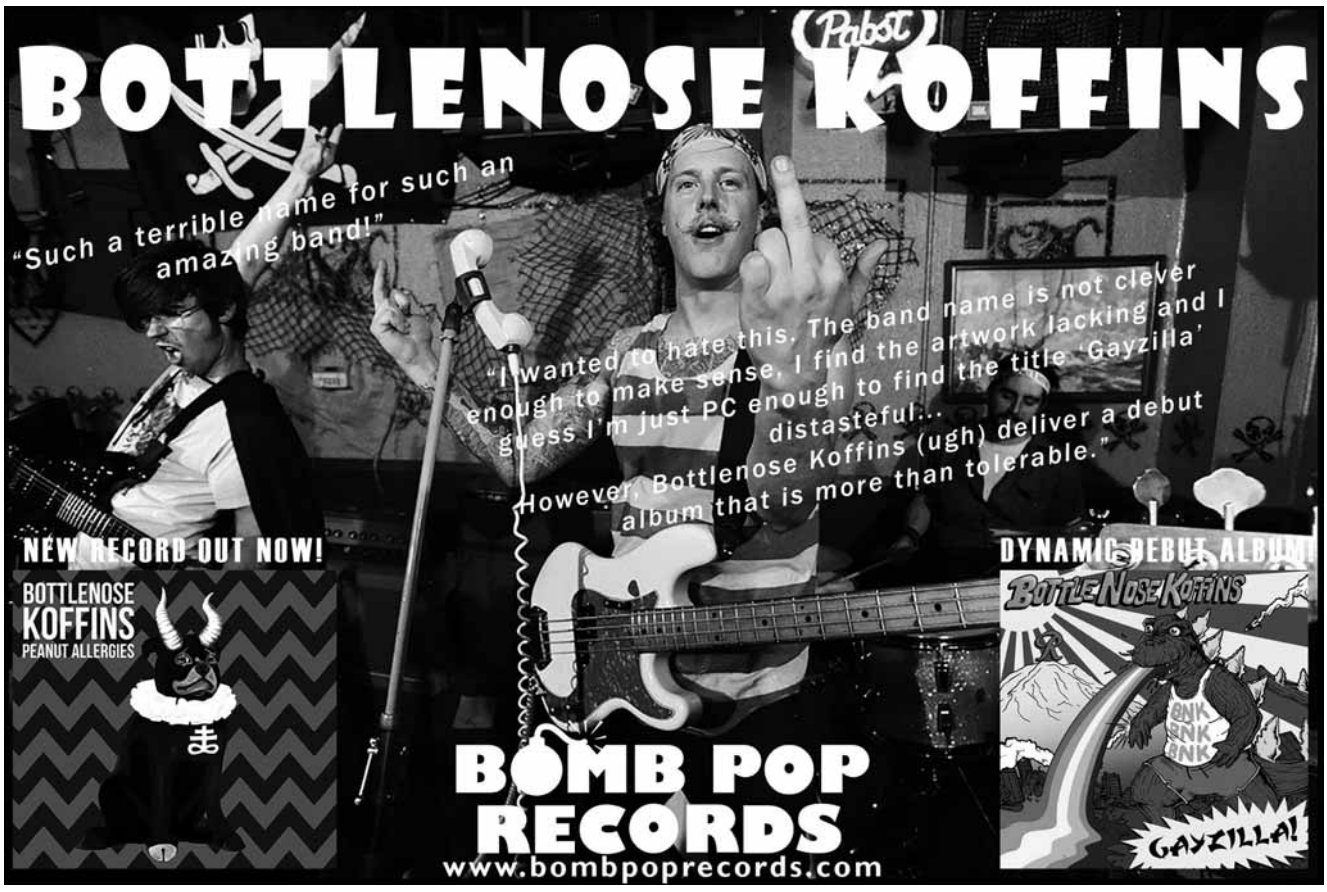
ROUND EYE: *Round Eye:* LP/CD
Don't judge a book—or in this case a record—by its cover. I wouldn't have been surprised to discover the artwork being used for the album containing some mystical transcendental meditation process. However, nothing could be further from the truth as Shanghai-based American ex-pats, Round Eye proceed to confuse and confound over seventeen tracks. To apply a single label to this band would be a total folly, as nothing would stick for long. The first track opens with a killer Greg Ginn-like riff which descends into a concussive blend of saxophone, bass, and drums before fading out with a more electronic vibe. From thereon in all bets are off as to what will follow, but at times it does encompass The World/Inferno Friendship Society, Captain Beefheart, jazz, punk, and doo-wop within its kitchen sink approach. It's an intriguing and entertaining debut album which, even after numerous plays, leaves me somewhat bewildered as to where it's coming from. –Rich Cocksedge (Ripping, runnamucks.com/rippingrecords.html)

SABERTOOTH: *Space Between:* LP
I will shop a record based on its graphics and design. I think most browsing consumers do the same, visual stimuli being the first contact point and potentially being a major deciding factor (sans audio availability). Keith Caves' art cuts, much like the dagger of the back cover, with Pettibonesque starkness. Inside the grooves of Sabertooth's third and final release, according to Todd of Debt Offensive's note, is pop punk/melodic hardcore from Calgary with nods to Lifetime and Kid Dynamite. Maybe it's the fact that *Space Between* is the bookend of Sabertooth, but the songs carry a genuiness and honesty that carries beyond those foundations. The difference between being apt and loving what you're doing versus being compelled and living what you're doing. Melodic hardcore is often fun, but age it, run it through the experience mill, and Sabertooth is shouldering a deeper connection in listening experience, more akin to None More Black or Smoke Or Fire. Seek this one out, limited to three hundred. –Matt Seward (Debt Offensive, debtoffensiverecs.bigcartel.com)

SECND BEST: *Fact:* CD
Secnd Best is the Portland, OR. punk scene's perpetually underrated stepchildren. Despite its practiced harnessing of a Bad Religion-esque harmonized fury, its unaffected, irreverent NOFX-ian charm, and its slavish adherence to being, like, really for reals DIY, it just never seem to get the attention it deserves. Help remedy that injustice by checking out the new self-recorded, self-produced, self-released full-length *Fact*, a mother lode of fourteen tracks that deconstruct humanity's complex relationship with authority through the lens of the 1961 Milgram experiment. Go ahead. Be the change you want to see in the scene. –Kelley O'Death (Self-released, secndbest.bandcamp.com)

SEE THRU DRESSES: *End of Days:* LP
These six songs seem to pick up where this Omaha four piece left off with their self-titled full length. It's a nice mixture of a number of styles, including shoegazer, power pop, and indie rock. (And is that some Silver Scooter influence I hear?) The fact that the Dresses have two vocalists (Sara Bertuldo and Mathew Carroll) adds another layer of possibilities to the band, which hits hardest when they tap into their emotional depths. The contrast in the last two songs is a perfect example. The fifth track, an introspective and sad tune "End of Days," would seem to be the perfect closer, but then the band follows it with the last song "Drag Scene," which leaves a little bit of hope with its poppy hooks (although it does seem tinged with a layer of introspection beneath the surface). It makes for a great one-two punch, giving me goosebumps—worth purchasing the album. –Kurt Morris (Tiny Engines, tinyengines.net)

SELF DEFENSE FAMILY: *"When the Barn Caves In" b/w "Alan": 7"*
Sentimental, dramatic post-rock born from the fires of hardcore and gutters of punk. There are some mornings when nothing sounds better than Lungfish. The plodding tempo that helps the transition from slumber to labor. An emotional weight that can put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some distance between your dreams and realities. Self Defense Family are chipping away at a similar sound/approach/gravitas. It's solemn, it's entrenched, it's preparing for what lies ahead. –Daryl (Iron Pier, ironpier.net)

SHADOW LAUGHTER:
***Nightmare Future:* 7"**
Shadow Laughter is from Tampa and play terrifically mainline oi/streetpunk, with retro lyrics about being punks and skins. Similar musically and thematically with the New England fashion punk bands of twenty years ago, this is oddly refreshing in today's largely anti-mohawk scene. The cover art by James Von Sinn, the singer of Rotten UK, is great, too. This is easily my favorite record of the issue, and is one of the best streetpunk 7"s I've heard in ages. Oddly sincere given how time-tested its tropes are, Shadow Laugher is anything but laughable. Get on board. –Art Ettinger (Self-released, shadowlaughter.bandcamp.com)

SHELLSHAG:
***Why'd I Have to Get So High?:* LP**
Shellshag might as well take a proverbial guitar and smash it into modern music, demanding that music be better. Don't even worry if you don't like getting high, this will get you chill and still keep you dancing. Besides, most of these are basically love songs. The vocals on "'90s Problem"—especially on the intro/outro—sound like an aching love song that my grandfather would play me from the '50s, but the instrumental core makes me want to dance around every room I have ever been in (as the lyrics ask the question, "Why did I have to get so high?"). The only way I can get songs like "Rattletrap" or "Pretty Eyes" out of my head is by replaying the entire record, and I am not even bummed. Plus the art of the liner notes is seriously sick. This record—released on Don Giovanni, a label that houses the likes of Downtown Boys, Worriers, and Screaming Females—belongs in your collection. –Madeline (Don Giovanni / Starcleaner)

SICK THOUGHTS: Self-titled: 7"
This single is so punk it's not going to sell out and give you song titles. One side reaches a GISM level of speed, gravelly vocals, and inserted guitar parts. The other side is more of an oi-ish anthem with "fuck you" repeated several times. It's an excellent no-nonsense single. Both songs resonate with me. –Billups Allen (No Front Teeth, nofrontteeth.co.uk)

SIEGE FIRE, THE: *Dead Refuge:* LP
This is a crust band, much like many that have come before, and like those that will surely come after. It's brutal, loud, and furiously fucking fast. Layered throughout the album are some pretty sweet hardcore breakdowns, but the majority of this record is a shit ton of sweet metal leads mixed with crunchy guitar riffs. If I had to pick anything especially distinguishable out from this band, it'd be the vocals. Very high pitched in tone, yet still gritty and gruff. The singer adds a level of intensity that I don't think would carry over with any other vocalist; there's a great amount of anger and desperation in his voice. And the lyrics are smart, as one would come to expect with this genre. You're getting lines like: "This new world / a barren scar at the heart of a sovereign state." I've said it before and I'm saying it again here, this is my preferred music to fall asleep to. Something about the absolute chaos of it really lets me relax. There are even a few songs that are just really atmospheric and chilling. For some people, mainly the crust uninitiated, it may come off as creepy and unsettling. But for me, it comes across as super melodic and comforting. –Kayla Greet (1859)

SNOOTY GARBAGE MEN: Self-titled: LP
Loud and heartfelt garage punk. This shit is so lo-fi my stereo can barely handle it. The requirements to make good garage punk are so threadbare, it can be tough to make qualitative judgments on records like this. What sets this record apart from other records of its ilk is the general vibe of schizophrenia that permeates throughout the entire release. Words garble together in both sound and visuals. The protective sheath of the record is covered in the endless ravings of a mad man, scrunched together in impossible-to-follow lines. I can't decide if I necessarily like this record, but at least it's interesting. Grade: B. –Bryan Static (12XU, 12xu.net)

SOFT SHOULDER: *No Draw:* LP
Soft Shoulder have this odd familiarity about them that I can't easily identify. They remind me of the very late-'90s into the early-'00s. Yet, they don't sound dated. Art-damaged, post-punk, post-hardcore, post... post. There's a minimalism here that gives the music a sharp edge. Guitars and bass stab and trudge forcibly forward while the vocals have a commanding presence. The material on the first side is okay—the songs have attitude and are catchy. It's the B-side with the hypnotic sludge of "Repeat #3" that hooks me in. It's a repetitive beat that brings to mind Can with its steady-yet-driving shuffle that stays the course for the most part as the rest of the song mutates, folds in on itself, morphs again, and then back. Sort of like a Morton Feldman composition—but punk and dirtied up. Listening to this change over the course of an entire side is pretty interesting—because the way in which it changes aren't always expected—and the journey to how it started at point A and arrived at an almost entirely different song at point Z is what will keep you on for the entire ride. More of this, please. –Matt Average (Gilgongo, gilgongorecords.com)

SPACE WOLVES: *V:* CS
Catchy, charming surf pop from a duo out of Buffalo. Without examining the box, one would almost be forced to assume such an album came from Burger Records or one of its sister companies. The songs aren't complex,

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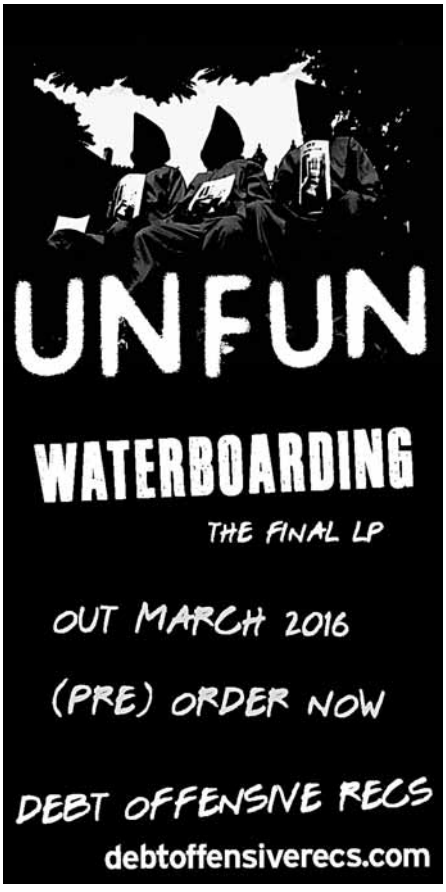

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but their melodies are really good. It's a simple formula but if you pump out a bunch of fun, fast songs, I'm going to enjoy it. Only one song on this thing is longer than two minutes. Perfect! The songs don't sound too similar, the vocals drive the song as well as play off the guitar, and the duo use each other to propel the song forward appropriately. This is how you do a two-piece rock band. And lucky for me, these guys have four more albums for me to check out. Grade: A- . –Bryan Static (More Power)

SPC ECO: *Dark Matter:* CD
Dark, moody tunes rooted on laidback, funky beats and synths. They could've easily drenched the whole affair in soaring, effects-driven guitars and had one fucker of a shoegaze release, but instead opt for a sparse, spacey production with the few guitars in evidence serving as sources for sound effects instead of strumming. Perfect soundtrack for late night drives through the city or movie scenes of people doing just that. –Jimmy Alvarado (Saint Marie, saintmarierecords.com)

SPIKE & THE SWEET SPOTS: *Strange Breed:* LP
Spencer Johnson's nasally vocals and mellow songwriting are front and center on the debut LP from this folky garage rock outfit. Both remind me of Daniel Johnston more than anyone else, though this is certainly smoother and cleaner than most of Johnston's work. It's a style that's more than saturated lately, but there's actually something really memorable and charismatic about these songs. There's personality under the reverb. The shuffling drums and twangy guitars give it some cowpunk undertones—nothing overpowering, maybe just the hint of a neon cowboy glowing over a dusty motel. That kind of feeling. There's a beautiful Shannon And The Clams cover somewhere in the middle that really rounds out the retro sound. –Indiana Laub (Randy)

SPLAT: Self-titled: 7″
Rust Belt dumbpunk for fans of the first Wax Museums LP, *Clerks*, and that feeling when you meet a new person at a party and are able to share your wildest drinking stories with someone who's never heard them before. It's not so much an exchange of ideas, but an enjoyable display of degenerate behavior. Rich in flaws and filthy in fun-esque-ness. My only *real* problem is the lack of detail in the referencing of the Germs' back cover art. And it wouldn't be too big of a deal, except This Moment In Black History (who hail from the same locale as Splat) did a spot-on job with their *It Takes a Nation…* LP. Perhaps it's the unconscious at work, and not a reference at all? –Daryl (Saucepan, saucepanrecords@gmail.com)

STATEN BRINNER: *Punk På Svenska:* 7″ EP
Punk På Svenska—or in English, *Punk in Swedish*—is a damn great EP in any language. These Swedes have harnessed the inherent power pop catchiness of the Buzzcocks and blended it with the brilliant brevity of any given Descendents cut. Infectious as fuck; the only drawback of listening to this 7" is the amount of times you have to flip the record in one sitting. Now if you'll excuse me, I've gotta go flip it back to Side A for the fifth time. Sätt att gå, Staten Brinner. Way to go. –Simone Carter (Luftslott, info@luftslottrecords.com)

STONE THE CROWZ: *Protest Songs 85-86:* CD
Stone The Crowz were a London-based anarcho punk band active in the '80s. They produced a couple of demos—tracks from which subsequently found homes on a few influential comps before the band broke up. A couple of members went on to form Axegrinder and their drummer started Endangered Muzik, which released early recordings by Anti-Sect and Oi Polloi. Collected here are tracks from those demos, plus a live cut, all of which show—surprise!—a heavy Crass influence lyrically and musically, although they do retain enough personality to keep them from sounding like a cover band. The usual ground is covered—war, shitty cops, religion, and, especially, animal rights. It's easy to sit some thirty years later and wallow in cynicism as it plays 'cause, facts being what they are, ain't all that much changed and, in some very major ways, have actually gotten much, much worse. It's just as easy, though, to remember a time when it felt like the world *could* be changed, a feeling permeating every track here and that once fueled the greater movement with which the band was aligned. We could definitely use a bit of that now, and a soundtrack just as good and inspiring. –Jimmy Alvarado (Overground)

STRAFPLANET: *Big Feelings:* 7″
Fuuuuuck! Truly punishing music here. Non-stop intensity and the riffs to back it up. Comparisons to Punch and No Statik will put you in the ballpark, but Strafplanet have got their own thing going on. Seven tracks of bludgeoning hardcore punk that slow down only to demonstrate how heavy they can get. As a whole, this EP is masterfully crafted and sequenced. They change it up with unique sounding parts so it's not just an onslaught of noise. This record is a straight-up rager. –Daryl (Contraszt!, info@diyordie.net)

STRANGE LORDS: Self-titled: 12″
Strange Lords are a garage/surf/psych duo from Florida that contains an ex-member of Against Me! A long line of fucked up, bluesy punk/garage bands before them—like the Cramps or even Pussy Galore—have paved the way for bands like this, and Strange Lords throw a layer of reverbed guitar of the top. There are parts of this that I like quite a bit and I believe that anyone with an appreciation for the kind of stuff that the infamous garage punk label Estrus Records used to release

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regularly would feel the same. The single-sided LP with a screen printed B-side is a nice touch as well. –Mark Twistworthy (Surfin' Ki)

SUBURBAN HOMES, THE: *"Conformity in the U.K." b/w "Television Spies":* 7"
Damn, this record is loud! First time I listened to it, I said to myself, "What, did Tim Warren master this?" Sure enough, he did! (For those not in the know, Tim Warren is Crypt Records. He has a second career as a recording masterer and he does a masterful job with each record. Shit jumps out the grooves!) Anyway, this record has a caveman-drum-pound intensity. Lyrics touch on the political and personal on "Conformity in the U.K." (although they're a mouthful, as there are so many) and the paranoid on "Television Spies." Total Punk is getting hotter with each release, as they seem to sell through pressings in days and I can't even keep up with them. Total Punk is definitely a label where you should buy every release, just because it's on Total Punk. They continue to deliver the goods, and Suburban Homes is a good fit. 'Nuff said! –Sal Lucci (Total Punk, floridasdying.com)

SUPERMOON: *Comet Lovejoy:* CS
Vancouver's Supermoon play lo-fi fuzz pop that I'm calling "A Tigertrap for the twenty-first century." "Burnout of My Dreams" is a good song title and a good name to dream of being given, but "Grounded" and "I've Been Told" deliver Supermoon's best blend of surf tones and catchy melodies over a singer recounting how she "watch[es] a documentary / of someone else's tragedy" in a dreamy song world where the strange and sad ride along together. If you were ever into The Organ or any of Rose Melberg's groups, *Comet Lovejoy* is well worth the "name your price" amount on their bandcamp. Meanwhile, I'm keeping my cassette copy as a hangover antidote. –Jim Joyce (Alarum)

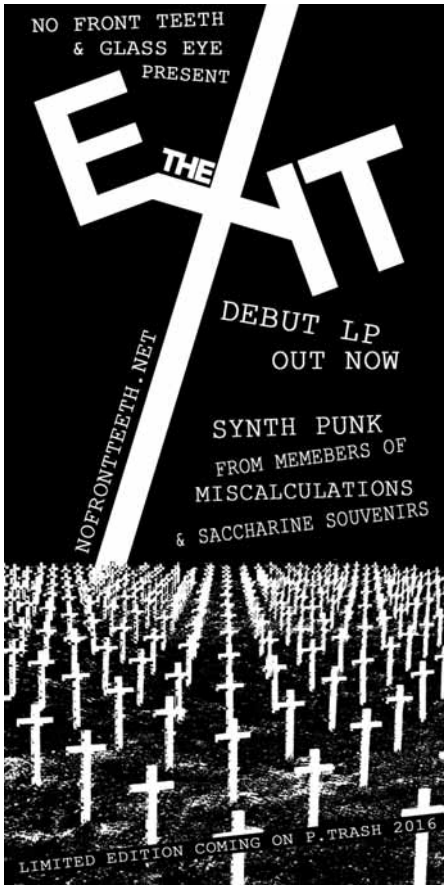
SWEET TALK: *Double Perfect:* LP
If Austin's Sweet Talk released *Double Perfect* six years ago when Denton's Bad Sports released their debut album, I would have said that you had your pick from two very similar-sounding bands and I would have given the advantage to Bad Sports. Today, I'd say that this record—while it still sounds remarkably like a chip off the ol' Bad Sports block—is a formidable album for fans of rockin' garage punk. The soaring guitar leads add a touch of Southern rock hospitality but without any of the sleaze typically associated with the bible belt states. Recorded by Orville Neely of Bad Sports and I swear to fucking god that I wasn't aware of that until after this review was written. –Juan Espinosa (12XU, sweettalkaustin.com)

TAME SOLEIL: *Outboard Sensory Meridian Response:* LP
There's a reason the sound of a motorcycle engine permeates this LP. It's the speed and freedom of Captain America coupled with Billy's bad lysergic trip. Dangerous like Altamont. California if the San Andreas swallowed Brian Wilson. Fucked and out-of-tune guitars on top of a rock solid shimmy backbone shiver and shake. The A-side is preferable if you lean towards the funk and soul dirt and grit of an MC5-inspired rhythm section (and The Godz cover!), while the B-side leans a bit more toward an inspired Stones/Pavement hybrid. A psychedelic cup-o-tea to be enjoyed repeatedly. –Matt Seward (Dusty Medical)

TAPE MONSTER / GAS STATION OF LOVE: Split: CS
Allentown, Pa. enigma Tape Monster's first three tracks are basically the aural equivalent of connecting to the internet via a dial-up modem. By the fourth track, you are online discussing EVP phenomenon with teenagers on 4chan's /x/ board, and playing *4 Wheel Thunder* for Dreamcast while your mom uses the blender to make margaritas so she can momentarily forget she gave birth to you. Austin's Gas Station Of Love turns in tracks five through eleven. Respectively: "Meggs Nog," a street corner knockoff of Naked City. "Spacepussy," which could've been recorded by RuPaul's cystic twin. "Pepp Pizza," which might've been a Baz Luhrman song, had he sustained a serious head injury. "Codeine Outlaw," which I imagine is what having no friends sounds like. "Herb222," which is twelve and a half minutes long, and I respect you guys too much to lie and say I listened to it. "U.N.," which either features slow-mo Donald Duck descending into H.P. Lovecraft levels of madness or a fussy baby being shot with a machine gun. The cassette finishes out with "Tranny Porn." Epic trolling, dude. –Kelley O'Death (Self-released)

TELEVISIONARIES, THE: *Freezing to Death:* CS
Instrumental surf punk from Buffalo, New York's More Power Tapes, who are making an excellent showing in this review cycle. Big drums, lots of reverb, and a tsunami's worth of clever tempo changes. Lots of guitar tricks and fun, toe-tapping melodies, good enough to—albeit briefly—give Night Birds a run for their money. Standout track: "Glasstron." Check these guys out! –John Mule (More Power Tapes)

TENAFLY VIPERS, THE: *The Way of the Woods:* CDEP
Six-song release from this Boston band that plays action rock. Precise, pummeling, and perforating your eardrums, these gentlemen take no prisoners. "Broke So Good" features a groove riff that reminds me of Hendrix's "Manic Depression" then veers back into uncharted waters. The next song really sums it all up in the title: "Teenage Girls & Free Cocaine (All Night Long)." "Napalm Discipline" sports an excellent chorus that uses the backing vocals like a concealed weapon. If Lemmy and Buzz from The Melvins formed a



supergroup, it might sound a bit like this band. Worth checking out. –Sean Koepenick (Self-released, facebook.com/tenaflyvipers)

TESTOSTEROSO: *Into the Sun:* CD
You are invested enough to put out a physical CD in 2015 and you can't do better than this terrible band name and a naked woman with pig head riding a hot dog into space on the cover? Testosteroso play boring-as-shit "rock" with no riffs, no hooks, and nothing to stand out in any way. This is nothing more than a band that you suffer through while you wait for the next band to start at your local music venue. –Mike Frame (Self-released, reverbnation.com/testosteroso)

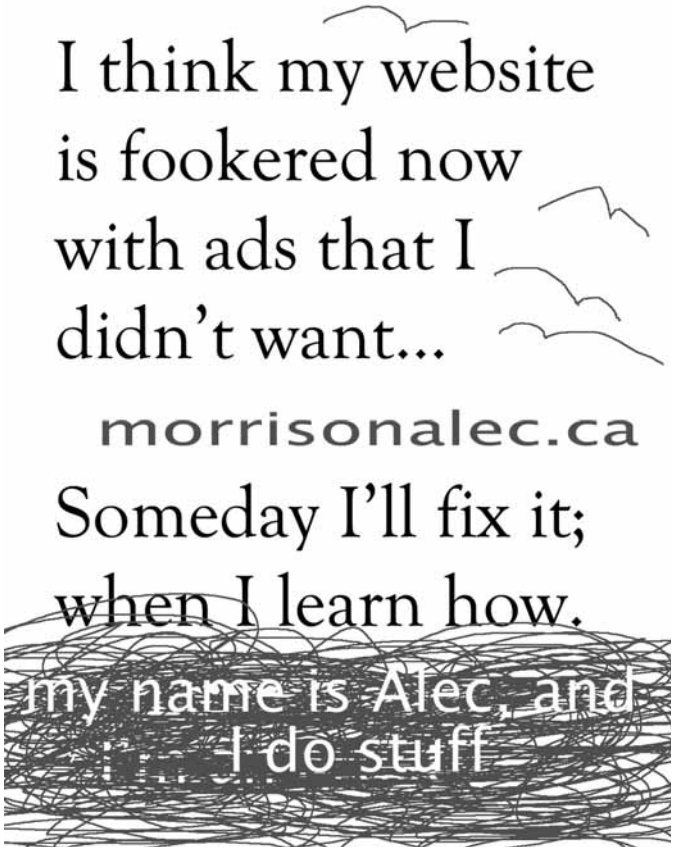
TOMBOY: *Sweetie:* LP
A solid entry in the "fuck the gender binary" canon. Loud, but deliberately paced in that '80s alt rock kind of way. The slowed-down aesthetic does some favors for their overall sound, as the dynamics between the drums and guitars play well against each other. There's an underlying post-punk influence that fills out the room, like the production legends of old. Tomboy sounds big, their presence is commanding on record. I can only imagine the science these guys bring to the stage. Their songwriting strength really comes out on Side B, with the off-kilter call and response of "Bethany" and the aggressively stoned but gentle "Can't Stand You," which make a case for the disc themselves. That's not even mentioning their absolutely essential jam "I'm in the Fucking Band," which is a must-listen for everyone. Buy the record if you want, absolutely listen to "I'm in the Fucking Band." Grade: A. –Bryan Static (Ride The Snake, ridethesnakerecords.com)

TORINO/ ZERO AGAIN: Split: EP
Two French bands on one record. Zero Again sing in English with a Leatherface- meets-Bob-Mould-sound. The vocals are gritty and heartfelt while the music is really upbeat and catchy, similar to what the aforementioned bands do really well. Torino sing their tunes in French, which I'm a fan of and I think sets foreign bands apart in a good way. They blend punk and driving hard rock together nicely. Anyone who is a fan of the BYO split series should check this record out. –Ryan Nichols (Echo Canyon, echocanyonrecords.com)

VAN BUREN WHEELS, THE: Self-titled: 10" EP
The Van Buren Wheels from Phoenix AZ were a '60s rock-inspired garage band boasting a Vox Continental organ front and center. Lasting all of four years before drug abuse and the death of their vocalist Vince Bocchini did them in, the band started off doing covers before penning originals, which are what this record compiles. The liner notes are quick to point out that there were no other bands playing this style of garage rock at the time in Phoenix, though their sound eventually caught on posthumously. The Van Buren Wheels certainly do have the kind of appeal that is all too common these days with bands like King Khan And The Shrines leading the charge. If there's any justice left in this world these six songs will finally give the band their due. As if the 10" record format wasn't obscure enough, this platter also features a 45 adapter hole. You read that right: a 10" with a 45 hole. Recommended for those who can appreciate the trinity of budget rock, garage, and '60s rock'n'roll. –Juan Espinosa (Slovenly, slovenly.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Bay Area Retrograde Vols. 1 & 2:* CD
A corker of a collection of assorted synth-related noise straight outta Frisco's first couple of punk/wave waves. Those with a more holistic view of the term "punk" will find many interesting and diverse sounds—neo-psych-punk, mutant disco, oddball wavo stuff, synth punk and beyond—courtesy of Tuxedomoon, Chrome, Red Asphalt, Wasp Women, Nominal State, Voice Farm, Danny Boy And The Serious Party Gods (who turn in "Castro Boy," a gay-themed piss take on Zappa's highly successful piss take, "Valley Girl"), Units, Factrix, and many, many others. Both volumes released thus far are collected on this disc and both are indispensable. Kudos to Dark Entries for showing some love for a too-often neglected and dismissed aspect of punk's first salvos. Now if only someone would do the same for Los Angeles…. –Jimmy Alvarado (Dark Entries)

VARIOUS ARTISTS: *Feral Kid Mix Tape Volume II:* CS
I will always have a soft spot in my heart for compilations, as they were one of the ways I discovered punk and hardcore at an early age. They are not only an excellent introduction to an array of bands, they are a great intro to a label as a whole and make nice road trip mixes. The *Feral Kid Mixtape Volume II* is a great collection showcasing previously unreleased songs by thirty-three bands. That's a ton of tracks on a single comp! The immediate thing I appreciated about this comp was the eclectic variety of bands. From the surf rocking of Aaron & The Burrs, to Skate Korpse, to Fleshy Mounds, you'll be hard pressed to find a compilation as diverse as this in any format. The sheer variety and number of tracks not only kept this interesting, but gives this comp a wide appeal. There's something for damn near every punk fan to appreciate on this tape. A number of the recordings are on the grittier side of things, which might be polarizing for some but should in no way sway the reader from checking this out. If you're looking for new bands to check out, you're bound to be stoked on something here! I know I was. –Paul J. Comeau (Feral Kid, xFeral_Kidx@yahoo.com)



VARIOUS ARTISTS:
***Give and Take 2012:* CD**
Back in the day I used to love obscure cassette compilations from places like Yugoslavia or South America, as the sounds were so different and showed how music from different countries was unique. With the internet, a band from Russia can sound like a band from Seattle. The world is homogenizing and we are starting to lose any individuality. Case in point this disc from 2012 (did it take three years to get here?), which could be from anywhere. The only thing that unites these bands is location, so we go from dreadful NOFX bro punk to grind to anarcho stuff. The majority of bands sing in English and sound like they could be from down the street. There are some notable exceptions like Brayok and Perek Kasi Gerek—who while didn't wow me musically, but at least they sing in their own language. Don't get me wrong, I'm super happy that unexpected countries get some coverage but I struggled to get through the whole thing. –Tim Brooks (Tenzenmen, tenzenmen.bandcamp.com)

VARIOUS ARTISTS:
***Deep Secret Vol. 3:* CS**
Although there doesn't appear to be any information to clue you in as to the focus for this compilation, after a little internet sleuthing I have concluded that this is in fact a regional compilation zeroing in on the state of Texas. Just as expansive as the state itself, there are a bevy of styles and genres represented such as punk, garage, indie, and experimental. Standouts include the Secret Prostitutes, Ghetto Ghouls, FOGG, Crooked Bangs, and Hidden Ritual. Further research indicates that the previous two volumes of this series showcase Southern Texas bands (volume 1) and '60s bands (volume 2). I look forward to a fourth installment should it ever come to fruition. –Juan Espinosa (Burger, burgerrecords.com)

VICIOUS DREAMS: Demo: Cassette
Orlando, Fla. punk'n'roll band Vicious Dreams appears to take their '77 punk aspirations very seriously. The fashion sense, vocal style, and chord progressions read like a calculated Enid Coleslaw approximation of '70s punk authenticity. Plus, the "Vicious" half of their moniker naturally evokes a certain hack bassist who many still scramble to lionize. Their throwback aesthetic seems calibrated from top to bottom to reference the era with an unwavering devotion that leaves little room for innovation. The song structures and just-lo-fi-enough production serve their intended purposes, but the general talent and competency on display make me wonder if there isn't something more interesting lurking beneath Vicious Dreams' this-is-what-we're-going-for vibe. –Kelley O'Death (Self-released, viciousdreams.bandcamp.com)

VIOLENT BULLSHIT / CHRON TURBINE: Split: 7"
Violent Bullshit's brand of hardcore punk is quite playful. Squealing guitar leads, party bus gang vocals, and a singer who does not fear '80s hair metal territory. I trust they can turn your run-of-the-mill bar show into chaos, so kudos to them for that. Chron Turbine lays down some post-rock/post-hardcore/post-punk/post-uuuuhhhhh, *who knows!* It's repetitive and heavy. Dense yet accented. Psychedelic music for people who just like beer. This 7" definitely works as a decent introduction to two very different bands. Now feel free to acquaint yourself. –Daryl (Peterwalkee)

VIRUS: *"Illuminati" b/w "Vanity": 7"*
Crabby, dour Brit-punk. Well-played and produced. Sounds like two songs off an old compilation album I would have gotten when I was seventeen and not listened to for the last twenty-five years. I do enjoy the pineapple Life Saver® colored vinyl, however. BEST SONG: "Illuminati." BEST SONG TITLE: Don't care. FANTASTIC AMAZING TRIVIA FACT: Record self-identifies as "LOUD PUNK." What ever happened to "File Under Power Trash?" –Rev. Nørb (Subversive Haircuts)

WAR//PLAGUE / VASTATION:
United in Darkness: 7"
War//Plague sounds a lot like The Awakening, who were pretty solid. Crusty stuff, with that wonderfully dirty guitar tone. One original and a Totalitär cover. Vastation is the new name for Portland's Night Nurse, and they have the Cookie Monster/metallic licks/gloomy, drawn-out riffage thing down pat. They dedicate their side of the split to a recently deceased dog, which I thought was pretty sweet. –Keith Rosson (Profane Existence)

WATERTANK:
***Destination Unknown:* LP**
Melodic sludge/grunge with hints of shoegaze bombast thrown in for good measure. While not breaking any new ground, the hooks are strong, the delivery sounds sincere, and the tunes might've been able to find a home on terrestrial radio two decades ago. –Jimmy Alvarado (Solar Flare)

WILD MOTH: *Inhibitor:* LP
The Wild Moth boys have one of the cleanest aesthetics in punk. My eyes feast on everything they put out. It's a bonus that this is their best release to date. The guitars are dense and chuggy, Cal's drums attack, and the bass blends into the ocean of fuzz. Nothing feels sedated or meandering. Austin's vocals are the most confident they've ever been, sometimes veering into Stephen Malkmus territory of talk-singing. Wild Moth are less ambient and more focused on crafting tightly wound post-punk ragers. "Gallery of Walls" is a hardcore-tinged blitz that resembles The Proletariat. "You Found Out" is an epic closer with enough noise and power chords to overload your ear drums. "Traces" is my favorite tune, though, because of its haunting riffs, fast tempo, and restrained—but aggressive—vocal delivery. For all of the good, it's a

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shame that there are two throw-away instrumentals ("Silver" and "V") that reduce the LP to only eight songs. I'm just bitter because I want more. –Sean Arenas (Iron Pier, ironpier.net)

WILD WINGS:
***World War Wild Wings:* CS**
Loud music played by clearly inebriated people. Sloppy and not incredibly fun to listen to. Somewhere between bar rock and '80s SST bands. Grade: C. –Bryan Static (Stale Heat, staleheat.bigcartel.com)

WOLFPACK: *Seen Not Herd:* CD
Pretty pissed-off shit from this Melbourne, Australia three piece. Wolfpack sets their sights on corporate music, corruption in the church, and rampant consumerism—among other things—with conviction. Most of this disc veers toward the metal side of the punk spectrum but, thankfully, isn't full of guitar wanking. Musically, the Pack is pretty much spot-on: tight riffing, interesting instrumental interplay, and spirited drumming. I mean these guys aren't reinventing the wheel here or anything, but I have no complaints and the band apparently chooses to give any profit they make from the band into charities. Profits from this CD all go to a dog rescue organization, which I am totally behind. –Garrett Barnwell (Sudden Death)

YEAR OF GLAD: Self-titled: EP CS
Grab your lover's hands and skip into the time machine that is Year Of Glad; set it back, waaaaay back. Back to your lovesick, overdramatic teenage years. Having been hidden away, cloaked in the shame and embarrassment of your own coming of age for so many years, you might wanna stretch a bit, dust off the cobwebs, and prepare to frolic. If there was ever a time to frolic, this is it. I may just be extremely over-caffeinated right now, but this tape is really percolating something within me. Sweetly sung perfect harmonies—this is pop-pop-poppy punk. Year Of Glad has me positively giddy! Even the saddest song "Flowers" leaves a big old smile on this mug o' mine. This debut from a gang of Philly veteran punkers is something of pure beauty, and it would be a disservice to yourself not to indulge. –Jackie Rusted (Lameo, lameorecords.limitedrun.com)

YOLKS, THE:
***Don't Cry Anymore:* 7" single**
The A-side is a nice mid-tempo number that brings to mind The Kinks in their prime. Well-done vocals. It's catchy and driving rock'n'roll that's never overbearing, but you are well aware of its presence simply because it's a nice pop song. But it's the B-side that really kicks ass. "I Wanna Be Dumb"—think of Ramones mashed up with Pagans and some obscure KBD type of band. Simple and to the point. A winning formula that is actually hard to attain. Yet, The Yolks pull it off with style and, dare I say it, grace. Such a great punk song. One that gets repeated listens. First time I heard this was on WFMU, and I was in awe. The kind of song that embodies all that makes punk great. –Matt Average (Randy, randyrecords.bigcartel.com)

YOUTH BRIGADE:
***Complete First Demo:* 7"**
There's something awesome about walking into a record store having heard of a record, wanting to buy it, and finding it. This is a bit off-topic, but I had that experience twice this week. Walking into a D.C. record store and finding the latest Dischord release is no real trick, but wanting that release can be. Dischord has opened the vaults so much lately I was afraid I'd have nothing to say about this record, but it's on the high end if you're into '81. All the songs sound angry and classic. There are many variances from their *Possible* EP, the band's only output besides a *Flex Your Head* appearance. This is one of those times the demo exceeds the product. A must-have. –Billups Allen (Dischord)

YUPPICIDE:
***Revenge, Regret, Repeat:* CD**
I first discovered Yuppicide in the late-'90s thanks to a compilation called *Mindset Overhaul* from Wreck-Age Records. I was immediately stoked on their blazing guitars and Jesse Jones' distinct vocal style—possibly one of the most distinct and badass voices in hardcore. Lyrically, the band swayed between topics political, personal, and nihilistic. It was a formula many could relate to at the time, myself included. So what does Yuppicide sound like twenty-five years in? To my ears, every bit as ripping as their first 7"s. The core of Yuppicide—guitarist Steve Karp, vocalist Jesse Jones, and bassist Joe Keefe—has remained unchanged for nearly twenty-five years, and veteran drummer El Guapo is once again on drums for this recording. On *Revenge, Regret, Repeat*, the raw power and aggression of Yuppicide's earlier material is here, but tempered by experience into two- to three-minute bursts of white-hot rage. The album is rife with singalong parts and ample opportunities for moshing and circle pitting, whether at the show or in your living room. I was particularly fond of the opening track "Spread the Infection," and the track "Bad Blood," for the mosh-spiration, but Yuppicide isn't just about the moshing and raging. You can count on the band to take things down a notch from time to time, as they do on the track "Ghosts," which has a bit of a ska vibe to it that I was into. *Revenge, Regret, Repeat* is so full of good material that you'll have a hard time picking a favorite track. It's a worthy addition to Yuppicide's catalog, and one of my favorite albums this year. –Paul J. Comeau (Dead City, deadcityny@yahoo.com)

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• **Homeless**, PO Box 2123, Brunswick East, VIC 3057, Australia
• **Hound Gawd!**, Kardinal-Galen-Straße 32, 47051 Duisburg, Germany
• **Independent Fries**, 333 Henry St. SE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503
• **Iron Pier**, 564 54th St., Brooklyn, NY 11220
• **Jelly Music / Reel Time**, PO Box 10512, Rochester, NY 14610
• **JSNTGM**, 16 Windmill Close, Blackpool, FY3 0EB, England
• **Kill Rock Stars**, 107 SE Washington St. Suite 155, Portland, OR 97214
• **Lost Cat**, PO Box 2121, Saint Cloud, MN 56302
• **Luftslott** c/o Lindkvist, Furuvägen 10, 91335 Holmsund, Sweden
• **Misra**, 6101 Penn Ave., Suite 201, Pittsburgh, PA 15206
• **More Power Tapes**, PO Box 467, Buffalo, NY 14226
• **NMF**, 2342 N. Sheridan, Indianapolis, IN 46219
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• **Not Like You**, 102 Richmond Ave. SE, Albuquerque, NM 87106
• **On The Real**, 254 San Lorenzo St., Pomona, CA, 91766
• **Overground**, PO Box 1 NW, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, NE99 1NW, United Kingdom
• **Paradise**, 3904 Miraloma Ave., Anaheim, CA 92806
• **Peterwalkee**, 299 West Delavan Ave., Buffalo, NY 14213
• **Pit-I-Ful**, PO Box 3453, Gardena, CA 90247
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—Craven Rock
I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU

A.C.A.B. #2, $?, 5½" x 8½", copied, 8 pgs.
A short zine that lists and documents cops, fucked-up shit they've done, and their victims. The layout is a photo of an officer, name, age or length of time employed as police officer, and date of death (if deceased). Underneath their bio is a photo of their victim, "price paid for justice," and the event or "crime" that led them to their current status. Reading page after page about cops and the fucked up things they've done is an all-too-familiar and hard read. –Tricia (A.C.A.B., no address listed)

BELLATRIX, $4, 5¼" x 7", copied, 81 pgs.
This zine is actually more of a booklet to accompany an art exhibit than a traditional zine, but fuck it. Nick Canterucci is a Memphis-based artist and this exhibit was originally showcased in 2010 at the Odessa Gallery in Memphis. The content of the booklet is crude pop art about how absurd relationships and life can be. There are twenty pieces and some postcards covered; Canterucci describes the pieces—their inspiration, the materials used, et cetera. He also lays out the materials used and the size of each piece. I suppose if one had actually been at the exhibit it would be a handy, informative background artifact. The art isn't bad, but I'm not sure what the reach of this would be beyond those in Memphis, those who know Canterucci, or those who were at the exhibit. –Kurt Morris (Nick Canterucci, 2264 Elzey, Memphis, TN 38104)

BLACKPOOL ROX II #10, £2, 8½" x 11", glossy, 15 pgs.
A thoughtfully curated selection of articles, essays, and interviews that document the thriving scene in and around Blackpool. The main topics are the contributors' primary loves: punk and football (the U.K. kind, of course). Featured bands include Epic Problem and Stay Clean Jolene, and there's also a lot of discussion of Rebellion Festival, the huge fest that takes place in Blackpool every year. I may not be particularly interested in most of the bands that play Rebellion, but it's always interesting to get some insight into the kinds of people who organize events like that. This zine is certainly in touch with the roots of the scene, with contributions from as many older punk stalwarts as young upstarts. And everyone seems to have a say on the matter of the Blackpool Football Club. That's a culture whose complexities I can't even pretend to be able to grasp, but it's fascinating to read about the intersection between the sport and DIY punk culture, the ways politics and business and violent macho losers constantly threaten something that should belong to the community. This is a short read, but it's clean and well-produced, offering a quick look into what seems like a successful and tight-knit scene halfway around the world from me. –Indiana Laub (Blackpool Rox Towers, 16 Windmill Close, Blackpool, FY3 0EB, United Kingdom)

CONTESTED GROUND #1, $?, 5½" x 8½", offset, 30 pgs.
Every four years the World Cup stokes my fair-weather soccer fandom. I have a great time watching all the games, pledge to pick a Premiership team to follow, and then inevitably feel overwhelmed at the prospect. There's so much accumulated history and data to be considered that the idea—well-intentioned though it may be—becomes akin to the feeling I got after reading the first twenty pages of Proust. Too much. *Contested Ground* makes me reconsider. Rather than focusing on the stats and games and history, the folks behind this zine take a more human approach, talking about their connections to teams. It's friendly, and is written with non-fans in mind—no jargon and no assumptions in play. The easy point of reference here is Nick Hornby's *High Fidelity* (not to be confused with that awful Jimmy Fallon movie—and this coming from a Red Sox fan!), but I think the fan-friendly approach is closer to Steve Reynolds and Mike Faloon's fantastic baseball zine *Zisk* (which, in the interest of full disclosure, you should know I occasionally contribute to). If you aren't a sports fan, don't be put off by the subject matter—the writing herein is well-executed and rewarding enough for even those amongst you who are vehemently anti-sports. –Michael T. Fournier (contestedground@googlemail.com)

DEEP FRIED #5, 5 ½" x 8 ½", copied, 20 pgs.
Deep Fried is the zine where fast food and punk rock come together in the most absurd and wonderful way possible. Everything about this zine is a total blast, starting with the layout, which is chaotic yet organized. This is the international issue, so it includes important information about how to properly order fast food in Japan. There are fast food-centric interviews with The Make Overs from South Africa and The Salad Boys from New Zealand. On the surface, the fast food questions are goofy; upon closer examination it's actually interesting to understand the varying ways that bands from different countries interact with fast food in their home countries versus when they're on tour and whatnot. Here's hoping for a long run for this total party zine. –MP Johnson (facebook.com/deepfriedzinempls)

EARTH FIRST! September/October 2015
$6.50, 8½" x 11", newsprint, 72 pgs.
For some reason I was projecting some serious anarcho-pomposity on the *Earth First!* zine before I read it, surely because of my association of the movement with the two-year-long consensus meeting that was my own baby anarchist period. But I'm glad to discover that the folks behind this are self-aware from the first page, from which an editor beseeches me to "run with the shadows of the night in the company of owls, foxes, and other charismatic non-humans!" So that's a good start. What follows are seventy solid pages of thorough reporting and analysis of some of the recent developments in environmental activism. There's coverage of the Rising Tide protests against Arctic drilling that took place in Portland a few months ago, a celebratory piece on the impending doom of Sea World, and plenty of other reports on activism in Finland, Germany, China, Argentina, Guatemala, and dozens of other places around the world. There's also a very relevant piece on white people dreads and the defensive arguments most commonly employed by those who are white and dreaded. Oh, and a crossword puzzle. This issue closes with the article "No Cutting Trees Down March," a report on preschooler Lemon's first foray into anti-clearcutting direct action. It is now my favorite article about radical politics. –Indiana Laub (Earth First! Journal, PO Box 964, Lake Worth, FL 33460)

EVERY THUG IS A LADY ADVENTURES WITHOUT GENDER
$?, 4½" x 6", perfect-bound, 72 pgs.
Julia Eff has issues; or rather society has issues with Julia Eff. Perhaps it's both. In fact this zine is just bursting at the seams with them, and this is just one way Julia deals. A ritual in writing and in art, it's a cleansing—a loud yell, a gentle whimper. So look, I'm in no way an expert on non-binaries, gender neutral pronouns, or transgender or gender queer issues so I thought this was an enlightening and brutally honest way to show the real struggles of someone who has gender dysphoria. Julia delves into the dark, dirty alleys of the individual societal subsets that constrict and shape gender identity. Relationships with men, women, parents, hair, make-up, clothing, shows, goth, music, and yes, pronouns! Lots of pictures of Bowie, Marilyn Manson, Twiggy Ramirez (?), and some other androgynous, seemingly miserable goth icons Julia likens themself to. Tidbit cartoons, drawings, and picture collages keep the tune of this zine morose, bleak, and full of angst—and oh so goth. An eye-opening and angst-filled zine. –Camylle Reynolds (Pioneers Press, 816 N. Main St, Lansing, KS 66043, pioneerspress.com)

FRIENDS, GET WAYWARD:
NOTES ON TRAVELING IN AMERICA, 4¼" x 8½", 29 pgs.
In an effort to see America before it becomes "one giant Wal-Mart," Adam Gnade sets off across the country and records his experiences in this small travelogue of a zine. He drinks whiskey, reads Dostoevsky, visits the homes of his favorite dead authors, and gets solicited by a young prostitute in a train station, turning her down only to see her leave with the next man she approaches. *Friends, Get Wayward* does what any good travel writing ought to do: it makes me want to travel. As Adam writes, "This zine is an attempt to see [America] how it is before it's too late." In this still-early season of political vitriol, divisiveness, and outright fascist bullshit, it is nice to sit down with this zine and see the country through Adam's words. –John Mule (Punch Drunk Press)

GRIMM MEMES, $3.50, 5½" x 4½", copied, 46 pgs.
The very idea of this zine is such bullshit that only out of a sense of duty will I elaborate on the contents therein, which are a bunch of internet "memes" (a meme has to be viral, hence Grimm Memes = not memes). *Grimm Memes* is the same shit you'll see on Facebook: someone taking a picture and putting some phrase *they* find clever around it in a font familiar. *Grimm Memes*' attempts at humor and political agitprop are so unimaginative and obvious they don't even stand as satire, just fact. For instance, using a picture of cops in riot gear and just writing "terrorists" under it; are they going for social commentary or just labeling things for someone who's learning English as a second language? But the content isn't what's offensive to me, it's the concept. Why would someone put a bunch of dumb Facebook shit in a zine? It's bad enough on Facebook. What has happened to zine (and underground) culture since the internet came along is bad enough, why twist the knife by taking one of the stupidest, most trite, most egocentric elements of it and printing them in a zine? What did Grimm do with their first five (free) Uber rides, use them to pick up unemployed cabbies? –Craven Rock (Grimm Memes/God Bless America Projects, PO Box 32824, Kansas City, MO 64171, godblessgenerica.com

A History of Surf—with a six-page, half-size zine accompaniment serving as some very informative liner notes. Together it tells the story of surf: its origin in Southern California; its competition with the British Invasion, and exportation to Japan and other parts of the world after being dwarfed by The Beatles; its death in the '70s and revival with the punks in the '80s. There's some awesome, overlooked surf on here from Russia, Turkey, Japan, and all over. A kickass mix with a lot of heart and maximum tremolo. –Craven Rock (Maximum Tremolo, PO Box 467, Buffalo, NY 14226, maximumtremolo@gmail.com)

NESTING: SELF-CARE TIPS FOR AUTUMN AND WINTER
9¼" x 5", $5, copied, 20 pgs.
Very helpful hints for making it through the cold times with your body and mind intact. Many of the suggestions are, as author Katie Johnson admits, fairly obvious: eat right, exercise, get some sleep, step away from the computer, drink water. It's in the details that this zine really shines. There are good, healthy meal suggestions: a hearty, sugar-free breakfast (avocado with salt, pepper, lemon juice; black bean-and-tofu corn tortillas), a light lunch (cherry tomatoes, edamame, yogurt), a soup and greens dinner. You should stretch when you wake up and before you go to bed. Take fresh air breaks and get some sun. Leave for work a half hour early. Drive slow, read before bed, watch one episode of a show (not an entire series)—and maybe make that show *Masterpiece Theater*. Tidy up, and even give up alcohol and weed for a few months (if possible). Johnson's suggestions for clean living—written warmly and casually—are common sense meant to make the grey months not simply bearable, but rejuvenating. It can be hard to plan these kinds of things; a healthy way of going about your life can seem like a dream unattainable when you're just trying to get by. But as one of her favorite quotes (also suggested: make a quote book full of wisdom and good sentences) from Gloria Steinem, puts it: "Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming, we lose the excitement of possibilities. Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning." I'm glad I'll have this zine on hand while I turn the thermostat up, wear long johns under jeans, and brush the snow off the car. –Matt Werts (Pioneers Press, pioneerspress.com)

Where fast food and punk rock come together in the most absurd and wonderful way possible.

–MP Johnson | *DEEP FRIED #5*

HEIRLOOM #3, $3, 5½" x 8½", copied, 18 pgs.
This personal zine was more engaging than I might have imagined. Cristina recounts her final days in Richmond, Virginia, before her move to Los Angeles. She gives up her friends, her job as a crisis counselor, her boyfriend, and a community in order to make some meaningful change in her life and stretch herself emotionally and mentally. As someone who has moved across the country twice, I can respect and understand what she's writing about. It's scary to make such a drastic change in one's life, but there's something empowering about it. There's also a heavy sense of remorse and grief that can come with giving up a place where one has lived for so long. Cristina touches on it to some degree, but it would've been interesting to get even more details and depth to what her life was like—the life she left behind. And why Los Angeles? What about that place drew her to it? It also would've been nice to know more about what her life had become in Los Angeles and if it met her expectations. Regardless, this is still a good read. I'd love to read more of Cristina's zines, so keep them coming! –Kurt Morris (c.isabellugo@gmail.com)

I DON'T KNOW HOW TO HELP YOU, 5½" x 8½", offset, 32 pgs.
Another one from Punch Drunk Press, a small press that seems dedicated to covering mental health issues (see review for *Simple Steps to a Life Less Shitty*) and this one deals with supporting your friends when they hit the depths of severe depression and despair. It's a collection of mostly creative writing by contributors, but the editor also included some relevant literary passages, lyrics, and quotes. Some of it moved me, some of it didn't. Overall, I liked the writing and editor's choices, but I'm not sure my personal taste is the point. This is a zine about how we have to take care of each other, respect each other's suffering, and do the best we can to just be there. It's about being an ally and it's important. Perhaps more important than anything else. –Craven Rock (Jessie Duke, 816 N. Main #200 Lansing, KS 66048)

MAXIMUM TREMOLO #3, with cassette, 4½" x 5½", copied, 6 pgs.
Maximum Tremolo is a zine dedicated to surf. This time they forego the usual articles, interviews, and crate-digging reviews and just give you a tape called

NIGHT OF NIGHTS, $?, copied, 4 ½" x 3 ¾", 12pgs.
Sweet little morsel read in five minutes flat. Starts off with dreamy drawings of crooners Ben King, Otis Redding, Sam Cooke, and James Brown and a "Slow Dance" set list to dance with your honey. It moves on to a surprisingly poignant tale of how Sylvester Stallone wrote "Rocky"—who knew? It's got a psych textbook tidbit of "Stage Six, Young Adulthood: Intimacy Verses Isolation." And then it finishes off with a vegan mint kiss cookie recipe. Also included is a link to the Nights of Nights as a video on Vimeo. This little zine is bursting with simple, saccharine drawings to brighten even the darkest moods. Sweet little read. –Camylle Reynolds (Angela Carlucci, angelaccarlucci@yahoo)

NO FRIENDS #1, $8, 8½" x 11", offset, 96 pgs.
Whoa! It has been some time since I've seen a new music zine come out that's this packed with content. Outside of the big two (one of which you're reading), I can't think of any other zines like this except *Mountza* and *Artcore.* It is put together by Ray Martinez (who may have the quickest stint as a coordinator in the history of *MRR*), Jim Zajackowski, and a busload of contributors. This zine does bring to mind *MRR* in layout and the columns section (though *No Friends* puts theirs at the back because they're different!), as well as in the tone of the content in the reviews and photo pages. However, *No Friends* seems to be more fun in its approach—and open in its coverage—interviewing comedy writer and radio personality Tom Scharpling, and interviewing *Pork* magazine in an attempt to go over the many carpings people have about that publication. (A noble effort, but the interviewee seems to be hiding behind a character.) Then you get conversations with Ausmuteants, Ray Creature, Martin Sorrondeguy, Slugbugs, Trance, and Capitalist Kids, plus a Lumpy & The Dumpers / Ausmuteants flexi. All in all, a great start to a zine I hope lasts decades, as they are needed and they are enthusiastic about what they cover. –Matt Average (No Friends, PO Box 12343, Chicago, IL 60612, nofriendszine.com, nofriendszine@gmail.com)

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Photo by Gail Bryck

RUM LAD #9, $2.33, 8" x 5 ½", copied, 8 pgs.
Rum Lad is a comic zine by Steve Larder of Nottingham sludge metal band Moloch. Larder's art is varied and frenetic. His cover resembles Paul Pope's high contrast, nearly realistic style, while his interior art is cartoonish and playful. This issue covers the Moloch/Cloud Rat Summer U.K. Tour. It's fun and brief, just as a good comic zine should be. Steve Larder is someone I'm now going to watch alongside Kevin Czap and Emi Gennis. It's a great time for DIY comics. –Sean Arenas (Steve Larder, stevelarder.co.uk)

$PARE ¢HANGE, #32, $2, 5½" x 8½", copied, 40 pgs.
You know the junk mail you get that offers ridiculous gifts, gaudy jewelry, collectible memorabilia, and more? Well Rev. Thomas Foote is well-acquainted with it, and decided one day to take them up on their offers… so to speak. One advertising publication *The Bradford Exchange* seems to offer the most ridiculous gifts and collectibles, and conveniently, the ads always include a no-postage-necessary reply envelope. The author mailed back tons and tons of junk mail, filling in the address and payment info lines with funny commentary on the items offered. The zine consists of scans of the junk mail, showing the item offered and his commentary. The items were all ridiculous! Need a glow-in-the-dark dream catcher masterpiece? *The Bradford Exchange* has got you covered. While Rev. Thomas Foote made fun of all the junk offered, some of them were so ridiculous I could see myself ordering one as a joke gift. –Tricia ($pare ¢hange, PO Box 6023, Chattanooga, TN 37401)

THRASHEVILLE #4, $10, 8½" x 11", copied, 116 pgs.
ThrAsheville covers the DIY punk scene around Asheville, North Carolina. This issue features more than a year's worth of small, color photos and brief show reviews, and ends with a variety of portrait collections. Flipping through, you see bands form and break up, venues change, haircuts grow, and even begin to spot familiar faces onstage and in the crowd. Scenester portraits are arranged by band shirt; the cumulative effect is a cool snapshot of a little world, like a yearbook or extended scene report. The overall tone is irreverent. –Chris Terry (ThrAsheville, PO Box 1965, Skyland, NC 28776-1965)

TURNING THE TIDE Vol. 28 #4, 11" x 17", newsprint, 16 pgs.
Turning the Tide is Anti-Racist Action's anti-racist, anti-fascist, and anti-colonial newspaper. It includes articles tying police brutality to the lack of jobs for black people, information on grassroots candidates, counter-revolutionary military initiatives, and more. *TTT* provides a voice to the people and a strong counterpoint to sanitized mainstream news and editorials, though I think its impact would be even stronger if it (or this issue, at least) didn't feel so male-focused. –Chris Terry (Anti-Racist Action Publishers, PO Box 1055, Culver City, CA 90232-1055)

WELCOME TO YOUR NEW LIFE OF YOU BEING HAPPY
$7, 5½" x 8½", 32 pgs.
I was gripped by the title of this right away. Then I turned it over, saw the quotes about the writer, and the ISBN printed on the bottom. That part confused me since I thought this was a zine of personal ruminations. The zine, or chapbook, is chopped into two parts. Part one is poems titled after songs that author Rachel Bell and her boyfriend sing at karaoke. I'll be the first to admit that poetry is not my bag, so it took me more than a few pages in to realize that's what I was reading. At first I thought there were going to be anecdotes about each song's relevance in her life. But, instead, we get lines like: "You exit the bathroom and I wonder if you can smell my poop and I love you," in "Linger" by The Cranberries. I can't help but feel like this comes across as banal, overly introspective prose intended to upset or shock the reader. Is this the G.G. Allin of alt lit? There's some internet shorthand thrown in, too, which just comes off as immature. What you end up with are sentences like: "My beautiful dark twisted boyfriend taught me how to female ejaculate, tbh." To be honest myself, I did enjoy the short stories in part two. There Bell tackles growing up doubting religion in Catholic school, questioning pro-life stances, and confronting feelings on her rapist. Though, even in that second part there are snippets that completely take me out of the piece—changing her tampon in an alley, kissing a guy next to the dumpster they just peed on, and "spilled mouth-jizz." If she could get away from the provocative "look at me!" style writing, I think it could be something really incredible. Instead, it feels like the Spencer's Gifts of storytelling. –Kayla Greet (pioneerpress.com)

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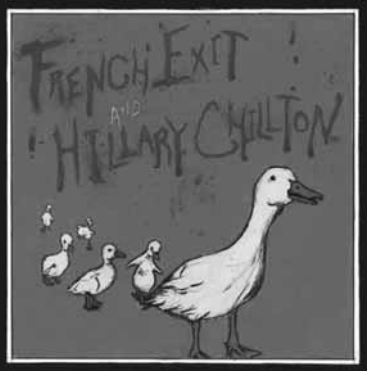

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A Collection of Stories from the '80s Denver Punk Scene
By Bob Rob Medina, 228 pgs.

The recipe for a scene biography (or whatever you wanna call it) in the post-*Please Kill Me* world has been a reasonably simple one: assemble quotes from scenesters to form some manner of semi-coherent narrative; add a few photos; garnish with lemon; serve over ice. *Denvoid and the Cowtown Punks* absolutely demolishes this idea as the eternal blueprint for such tomes, commanding attention from current and future generations simply on account of its unprecedented (or possibly only barely-precedented) MASSIVENESS. This thing is 8.5" x 11", the better part of an inch thick, and there's *full color on every page.* That just blows my mind. There's so much ink on these pages—which are themselves on rather thick stock, presumably to hold all the ink—that opening the book up to read it made the whole room reek of printer's ink. Unremarkable you say? I hasten to add that I started reading this book in the lunchroom at work, *and I work in printing, in a building that ALREADY reeks like printer's ink!* Even more mind-blowing is the sheer volume of illustrations in this thing—apart from the *de rigueur* scans of flyers and records, there are only a handful of photographs included here. The brunt of the illustrative workload is handled by the author's full-color drawings—there's probably at least two hundred in here—which bring to mind some manner of Brian Walsby/Vincent Van Gogh hybrid, using the gross, color-by-the-wrong-numbers palette of Wesley Willis for added eyebrow raises. The sheer amount of effort it must have taken *just to draw all this shit*—to say nothing of, you know, the writing and the interviewing—should really give future authors of such works pause, or at least grist for the mill of scholarly contemplation. So, yes. This is a huge, weighty, colorful, stinky, profusely illustrated, sparsely photographed book about the Denver scene of the 1980s, a scene that, due to relative geographic isolation and the absence of internet, mutated largely along its own trajectory. The author spends the first thirty-odd pages giving his own origin story, starting as a tween-age cholo before discovering The Punk Rock; then devotes the rest to interviews with the Denver movers and shakers of the day. Ultimately, while it's cool to read about Denver bands I'd largely forgotten—*Hey, the Rok Tots! Oh yeah, the Lepers! Whoa, the Anti-Scrunti Faction!*—the relative lack of star power (no offense intended) coupled with the book's sheer voluminousness might make this massive volume a tough sell to anyone not either deeply invested in the Denver scene or a rabid consumer of random scene biographies. –Rev. Nørb (Robot Enemy, bobrobart.bigcartel.com)

Human Punk
By John King, 341 pgs.

I am, of course, a sucker for books related in any tangential way to punk rock. Seldom does one come across my desk as impactful and artistic (yeah, I said it) as John King's *Human Punk.*

Joe Martin, the novel's protagonist, is a rough-and-tumble teenager when *Human Punk* begins in 1977. He lives with his parents, hangs around with his friends, and picks cherries and works in pubs to finance his record buying and drinking. Between tube station dust-ups with boot boys he sees tons of bands play, including a SPOTS-era Sex Pistols gig. And there's tons of speed to be snorted.

Joe and his friends copping lines serves as an important stylistic device throughout—the obvious connection first comes in King's prose, which extends over three or four pages without punctuation on nights when Joe and his friends are speeding, drinking, and show-going.

Events at the end of part one set the tone for the book's second and third acts. Part two shifts to 1988, as Joe takes the Trans-Siberian Express from Beijing West. As part one ends, Joe and his friend Smiles are thrown into a river by hooligans. Joe emerges physically unscathed, but Smiles—named this for his expression and attitude—doesn't. The time underwater changes him, and the guilt Joe feels in not helping his friend drives him across the world, where he lives in squalor and drifts from job to job.

Throughout part two, its train travel and hookups and flashbacks and the run-on cadence so joyfully prevalent in part one becomes something of a curse: no matter how far Joe runs, he's always stuck with and in himself. There's no escape from the events that shaped him. King emphasizes this both through his character's inner monologue and through the stylistic trick he establishes through his prose, which draws attention to itself in order to echo the good times gone awry.

By part three, Joe Martin has done something resembling settling down: he has a steady girlfriend, buys and sells used records for a living, and DJs clubs on the side. But Smiles is dead, the guilt remains, and the good nights are always just a few drinks away from becoming run-ons anew, reminding Joe—and us—of his inescapable past. Then (spoiler alert) a ghost appears and forces a reckoning.

In *Human Punk,* King weaves threads of punk rock throughout the narrative, both subtly and forcefully. As 1977 fades from view the working class attitude remains, as do references to bands, songwriters, musicians, friends. Punk rock is pulsing at the heart of this novel, but never intrudes on the story or announces itself for its own sake. PM Press has re-released this gem domestically on its fifteen-year anniversary. How I managed to miss it for so many years is beyond me. I'm grateful for the chance to read it. –Michael T. Fournier (PM Press, PO Box 23912, Oakland, CA 94623)

Punk rock is pulsing at the heart of this novel.
–Michael T. Fournier, *Human Punk*

Last Mass
By Jamie Iredell, 199 pgs.

Kurt Vonnegut set out to write his big novel about the WWII bombing of Dresden, but ended up with a weird prose-collage featuring a planet called Tralfamadore and birds that say "Poo-tee-weet." (*Slaughterhouse-Five*, if you didn't know. I no longer know what people know or should know.)

Jamie Iredell set out to write his big novel about Spain's colonization of California. His protagonist was going to be Father Junipero Serra, whom the *Los Angeles Times* summarizes as "the 18th-century Spanish Franciscan priest who founded nine missions in California and spread Catholicism around the western United States."

What Iredell ended up writing was his own collage of California's colonial history and his Catholic upbringing on California's Central Coast.

Iredell doesn't concern himself too much with parallels or contrasts, as that would be too easy. The church's treatment of native Californians was as horrific as you'd assume, but Iredell's life as a Catholic kid wasn't horrific or idyllic. And if it occurs to him along the way to write about *Star Wars*, or the Georgia cabin he sequestered himself in to work, then he writes about that.

Paragraphs like this:

> *Although Hernando de Alarcón's ascent of the Colorado River Delta in 1540 proved that Baja California was a peninsula, Spanish rhetoric written by Father Fray Antonio de la Ascensión, Carmelite friar for Vizcaíno's expedition of 1602-3, described Isla California, meant to discredit Sir Francis Drake's claim of Nova Albion for the British monarch.*

Share the book with paragraphs like this:

> *At Reconciliation the following Saturday I confessed to stealing the T-shirt. I never confessed to my other thefts, of baseball cards or chewing gum, or the butterfly knife I stole out of Chuck Calderon's jean jacket.*

I usually can't stand the results of a writer saying to himself, "I did all this research, goddamnit, I'm fucking using it," but *Last Mass*'s lack of compromise is fascinating—even Faulknerian. An interviewer once asked William Faulkner, "Some people say they can't understand your writing, even after they read it two or three times. What approach would you suggest for them?" and he responded, "Read it four times." I'm going to give *Last Mass* at least one more read: see what I notice the second time, see how much of Father Serra's frequently interrupted story I retain. Although I should probably mention that I was already interested in California history and was raised Catholic. –Jim Woster (Civil Coping Mechanisms, copingmechanisms.net)

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Nihilist, The: A Philosophical Novel
By John Marmysz, 164 pgs.

If the old standard of "showing versus telling" is really the cornerstone of fiction, then *The Nihilist* is about twenty-five percent story and seventy-five philosophical treatise. The actual *story* in this novel (and I'm resisting the urge to put the word *novel* in quotes) is couched somewhere between slim and nonexistent. The book honestly seems to be little more than a vehicle for the author to expound on his philosophical viewpoints. Page after page after page of them, be it in straight dictation to the reader, or in stiff, unrealistic verbal debate between the main character and someone, anyone else.

The main character is an ex-punk who eventually marries his college sweetheart and becomes a tenured philosophy professor. He has a few buddies from his punk days, back when they were in a band called, you guessed it—Nihilism. He talks with them. They debate. He talks with his wife. They philosophize. He teaches his students. They discuss issues pertaining to philosophy. Everything from death, to life's purpose, to fiction, to the grading of papers, to the purpose behind dreams is discussed in exhausting philosophical detail.

Yet, hardly anything of note actually *happens*, which is kind of infuriating for a novel, you know? You never get a particularly good sense of anyone's inner life because everything reads so stiff and robotic and academic. People converse like term papers. Even the wacky anecdotes about the nameless professor's punk days are so bland and formulaic any potential velocity is totally robbed. I mean, yes, okay—eventually the protagonist develops stomach troubles, mourns the death of his friends, shits his pants, *shoots fire from his nipples*... but it's all to the rich cadence of so much navel-gazing. It's virtually impossible to care.

Philosophy and fiction are at odds with each other because one is about showing, and the other is about espousing one's theories. Theories win here: pages and pages and pages pass without any dialogue or advancement of the story. I really do hate to bag on someone's work, but pages of academic rumination on the meaning (or lack of meaning) of life does *not* make for compelling fiction, whether or not you warn people in the subtitle of your novel or not.

It's possible that Marmysz is an excellent philosophy professor. In fact, I'd bet on it. He certainly knows his material, and he's clearly given these issues a lot of thought. But if one is going to use fiction as a vehicle for ideas, there's got to be as much story as there is documenting and essaying and expounding. And *The Nihilist* has way, way too much of one and not remotely enough of the other. –Keith Rosson (No Frills Buffalo, 119 Dorchester Rd., Buffalo, NY 14213)

Restart Me Up:
The Unauthorized, Un-Accurate Oral History of Windows 95
By Lesley Tsina, 80 pgs.

Computers are like health—you don't think about 'em until something goes wrong, at which point there's nothing else to think about. Anyone who's spent time on a help line can attest to this. It's so easy to get wound up by glitches and bugs, especially if, like me, you're a person who's not at all technically inclined (and especially times two if you're deadline-driven when said glitches go down). The notion of having a whole day or more derailed by a few lines of code is a folly particular to our era; maddening and specific.

So it makes sense that an oral history of Windows 95 would exist, right? Well, Lesley Tsina has written a *fake* oral history. She understands the aforementioned folly, that the computer realm is loaded with gags and punch lines, and elevates the oral history form to new comedic heights with this (mostly) fabricated story of Microsoft's lauded operating system.

I say "mostly" because some of the subject material here is so absurd that I assumed Tsina was spoofing the modern day media tropes that blare for our attention by looking back twenty years and making them less bombastic and thus more silly. This isn't the case, though—The Rolling Stones really gave permission for "Start Me Up" to be used as a theme song; Jay Leno really did host a gala premier. All of these events sound so '90s that on first read I gave kudos Tsina for spoofing every event opening, be it large or wannabe. The thing, again, is *that they all happened.* With that said, the conversations held around the real-life events were never as funny (such as the one here, in which Tsina's Bill Gates negotiates with The Rolling Stones, who previously had never leant a song to advertising, so that Keith Richards can feed his addiction to Beanie Babies).

In less able hands, the material here might easily fall flat. But Tsina (who in addition to writing has appeared on *Community*) boasts pitch-perfect comedic timing, and her jokes fully embrace the latent absurdity of computers and the people who to this day line up outside of stores to buy them before anyone else. It would be easy to change the delivery a few degrees and resort to geek cruelty, but Tsina never once does. Her writing is crisp and light-hearted throughout. *Restart Me Up* is an absolute tour-de-force of both form and function, with nary an error message or bum note to be found. Thumbs way up. –Michael T. Fournier ($10 suggested donation, 3372 Rowena Ave #2, LA, CA 90027)

Tables without Chairs #1
By Bud Smith & Brian Alan Ellis, 164 pgs.

This book is a slacker sandwich. There are two novellas about slacker dudes going about their day-to-day slacker business. Between them is a spread of bullshit—and I mean that in the nicest way possible.

The bullshit in the middle is a piece by Brian Alan Ellis called "Ha-Ha! Sad Laughter." It's really just a collection of tweets and tidbits that are probably only funny to other writers. Like: "Dreamed you got a rejection letter that thanked you for submitting your manuscript and then told you to burn in hell." I'm a writer, so I found a lot of it hilarious—especially the one about selling your first novel for a copy of *Playboy* with Chyna on the cover. (P.S., my copy is autographed.)

This is fun, but the novellas are where it's at. The first one, "Sexy Time in the Spook House, Oh Yeah!" by Brian Alan Ellis, is about a dude who lives in a spook house and is in a relationship-type thing with someone referred to as Sexy Time. He faces the usual trials and tribulations, which involve drunken karaoke to Alabama songs and girls in hippie dresses peeing in his living room.

The second novella, "Calm Face" by Bud Smith, is about a dude who lives in New York and gets grumpy about his corner bodega disappearing. He kind of wanders around and is awkward. He fills a pool in his apartment with a hose and calls it his hot tub. The water overflows and goes into his downstairs neighbor's apartment, but she already hates him anyway. He watches a horse shit in a bucket while eating a hot dog. I don't know if he has a job; I'm guessing not.

It's fun to laugh at slackers doing slacker business, right? –MP Johnson (House Of Vlad, houseofvlad.tumblr.com)

This book is a slacker sandwich. There are two novellas about slacker dudes going about their day-to-day slacker business.

–MP Johnson, ***Tables without Chairs #1***

Vile Men
By Rebecca Jones-Howe, 189 pgs.

I'd forgotten that the literary establishment doesn't often do ugly until I read Rebecca Jones-Howe's first collection of short stories. In *Vile Men*, Jones-Howe forges into our collective sexual grotesque of victims and predators and discovers actual human beings everywhere she looks. In that sense, this is a ferociously political book—as Tobias Wolff said, "[The] most radical political writing of all is that which makes you aware of the reality of another human being."

The collection begins with a woman who only has sex with a paper bag over her head, and if you think you know what kind of a woman would do that—well, you don't. And there's a kidnapping story that would have rattled Flannery O'Connor.

The book's prose is usually a now-traditional, first-person present tense: "On the way home I stop at the grocery store to buy a bag of ice for my drink, and I stand at the checkout counter, clutching the bag in both hands like it's a shield." The welcome effect is one of the author getting out of the way of her fairly indelible characters.

Dark House Press mainly publishes horror in the traditional sense of the word. The cover of *Vile Men* looks like the cover of a traditional horror novel, which might be a shame, or it might be an eye-grabbing paperback cover meant to get great fiction into the hands of people who wouldn't otherwise notice it. –Jim Woster (Dark House Press, thedarkhousepress.com)

I Need a Dodge: Joe Strummer on the Run: **DVD**

For nostalgia's sake, my favorite Joe Strummer movie is *Rude Boy*. My brother bought a copy of a copy at a used record store in high school and we used to watch the concert scenes over and over. When I was a bit older—in my late twenties—I went to the theater to see *Joe Strummer: The Future Is Unwritten*. It was another side to one of the few people I am willing to call my "hero": his childhood as a diplomat's son, talking about the merits of smoking cigarettes, and how everyone would be better off if they had to sit around a campfire together every night. I love that movie and I love remembering the way it made me feel when I first saw it.

I Need a Dodge is a very different sort of Joe Strummer documentary. It paints a picture of Joe in 1985, having kicked Mick Jones out of the Clash, and follows the recording of *Cut the Crap*, the only Clash record I've never even bothered to listen to. Joe admits that he is depressed and takes off for Spain where he buys, drives, and loses a Dodge; hangs out in bars; visits the grave of writer Federico Garcia Lorca; gets involved helping a local band; and tries to get over the end of the Clash. A beautiful moment in the film comes when a group of young kids think they see Joe in a bar and, not being entirely sure, decide to play a Clash record on the jukebox. Those kids, now middle-aged men, retell the story with smiles on their face.

I Need a Dodge is a documentary that plays like a folktale—stories of sightings and brief conversations or anecdotes—told by people who might as well be telling about their encounter with Bigfoot or a vanishing hitchhiker. For me, Strummer is on par with Bob Marley or Fela Kuti. World music. Transcendence. This story is another side of a brilliant and fascinating figure. Throughout the film, director Nick Hall makes attempts to track down Joe's beloved lost car—hence the title. This is a device that even the liner notes admit is a "McGuffin," something used for the sole purpose of pushing the story along.

I suspect we all imagine that, beyond our everyday life, there is some small village with a tiny bar and a decent jukebox. There, stressors are at a minimum and the stars are easily seen without the city lights to get in the way. This film shows that even Joe Strummer needed to get away and look for that other life. In the end, in one way or another, everyone needs a Dodge. –John Mule (Cadiz Music, 2 Greenwich Quay, Clarence Road, London, United Kingdom, SE8 3EY cadizmusic.co.uk)

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